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# Philip A. Littig GUIDE

TO

## TRUE HAPPINESS.

SHEWING,

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| <p>I. That real happiness is only to be found in true religion, and the means to obtain it.</p> <p>II. That a right government of ourselves, and an improvement of our mental faculties, are necessary to happiness, and that we may act up to the dignity of true religion.</p> <p>III. That the holy scriptures teach such precepts, and offer such subjects to our meditation, as are calculated to inspire us with true felicity.</p> <p>IV. A more plain description, both of the nature and fruits of religion.</p> | <p>V. A short view of the character of a religious man.</p> <p>VI. Some objections stated and answered, against the happiness of a religious life.</p> <p>VII. Some considerations offered, and rules to be observed, in order to a holy and happy life.</p> <p>VIII. The deceitful and alluring nature of sin, with its fearful consequences.</p> <p>IX. A short view of the wicked man's character, with a serious admonition to all who know not God.</p> <p>X. Some concluding remarks.</p> |
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BY SAMUEL COATE.

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*Happy art thou. O Israel! who is like unto thee,  
O people saved by the Lord? Deut. xxxiii. 29.*

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## PREFACE.

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HAVING been long impressed with an idea that it was my duty to write upon the all-important subject of religion, and leave something behind when I am dead and lying in the silent grave, that may speak and teach men the true way to happiness—

After dismissing these impressions for a number of years, at length I wrote some detached pieces with no design of continuing to this length : But afterwards I began to arrange those detached parts under proper heads, and to collect them into a body, and by adding a number of thoughts more to each particular, have swelled it to this size.

It is written in the plain simple stile that the author is accustomed to make use of in his extempore addresses, consequently those who are looking for eloquence or grandeur of diction, will find but very little here to satisfy their taste. I have endeavoured to address the reason and consciences of men, to convince them how far preferable a life of communion with God, and the pleasure

arising from religious reflection is, to any sensual happiness that men can boast of in this world, and to lay down those plain duties which (if attended to) will advance the soul in the pleasant way of holiness and true happiness here, and lead it to those *rivers of pleasure that flow at God's right-hand for evermore*. I would recommend to my Christian reader to look often over the eleven rules necessary to a holy and happy life, which he will find in the latter part of this treatise, and to try to frame his life according to them, and he will no doubt reap the advantage. But to conclude, if one soul should be convinced of his lost and undone estate, or if one should date his conversion from the reading of this little book, or one be built up in holiness and guided on more safely in the pleasant way of duty and happiness, the author will be amply rewarded for all his labour and study.

A  
GUIDE  
TO  
TRUE HAPPINESS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE is nothing more common among men, than an anxious desire for *happiness*; but those means that the greater part of them are so warmly pursuing in order to obtain it, are no ways qualified to make them *happy*, for nothing can administer *true happiness* but that which will give permanent contentment of mind. But in the enjoyment of earthly things, men may feel a momentary contentment, yet these being transitory in their duration, are no ways calculated to make their contentment permanent or lasting; for if we have any thing in possession to-day ever so pleasing, an anticipation of our losing it to-morrow, will deprive us of a great share of our en-

joyment: for 'that which is highest in our esteem, is most painful to our minds to be separated from. Then reason, revelation, and our own experience, with one united voice, as well as a thousand demonstrations around us daily, may evince to every thinking mind, that *true happiness* does not consist in an enjoyment of the fleeting things of this world: so true is that saying of our Lord, *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*.\* And with great propriety it may be said that a man's *happiness* consisteth not in the abundance of the trifling vanities of sense he enjoyeth, for those are but empty bubbles that are broken by the smallest zephyr; they are vapours that must shortly be extinguished, or a smoke that will soon evaporate in air; yea, they are dry husks that never can satisfy the craving desires of an immortal soul.

If we were to compass the unknown bounds of the universe, to soar into the immeasurable heights, and sink into the fathomless depths, and then continue our search over the wide extended earth in quest of *happiness*: the earth could cry out it is not in me, and the sea it is not in me;

\* Luke xii. 15.

and the whole creation could say, ye who seek for happiness within the limits of my province, are seeking it where it is not to be found. But notwithstanding this so highly valued treasure is not to be found in creature enjoyments, yet God has formed us for *happiness*, and there is something in which it may be enjoyed: but be that what it may, it must necessarily include these conditions.

1st, It must be agreeable and proper to human nature, and that which senseless and brute creatures do not partake of. 2d. It must be that which in itself will give full contentment of mind, without any other enjoyment abstract from it. 3d. It must be in our power to attain or retain at pleasure; for who would think it worth his while to seek for that which is out of his power to obtain; and on the other hand, it is something that we may not be dispossessed of, when gotten, by the changes of fortune or the caprices of men.

He, who in his search for happiness, can find any thing in which these properties meet, should so highly value that *treasure* as to sell all that he hath and purchase that field where it is.\* It is true, every man

\* Matt. xiii. 44.

proposeth something to himself, which if he could arrive at, he would think himself a happy person. But if these objects of pursuit are of an earthly kind, his alluring prospects are something like the rain-bow, which frequently appears near at hand, but as you advance towards it, it recedes from you ; and even if he arrives at those desired objects, they are generally like the shining bubble upon the stream, which you no sooner touch than it breaks.

One is aiming at nothing higher than a great deal of jollity and mirth ; to be with merry companions employed in idle talking, and so to pass the time away. Another is seeking for little else than to have at all times a loaded board and a flowing bowl, and thus like the Israelites, *to eat and to drink, and rise up to play.\** He is away to the different sceneries of diversion or entertainment ; gambling or dancing whole nights, or feasting his eyes at the theatre, while stage actors are displaying their parts ; or else to some other amusements equally degrading to *human nature*, of which there are thousands invented by the corruptions of men, not to speak of those bestial practices of gluttony, drunkenness, or going

to houses of ill fame, bringing a disgrace upon human kind and stamping an eternal odium upon their own characters. Some are desiring indolence or an exemption from all trouble, like the epicureans, and are saying, *Soul take thine ease, &c.\** Others desire a kind of wisdom like the stoics, *that puffeth up*; while they are destitute of the *charity that edifieth.†* One fixes his mind upon wealth and abundance; another upon honour and state; and a third pursues with all his might, some particular course of life, as a trade or a way of business, which if he could bring to perfection, he supposes he should have his desires fully answered: there are a multitude of these kinds of fancies, which many men esteem their *chief good*, or that are the utmost scope of their wishes. But very frequently they get disappointed in those things they set the highest value upon, sometimes cannot reach them, and even if they attain to them, they do not answer to their high expectations; sometimes in grasping after high things, they get sunk into the lowest and most ignoble state of poverty and shame.

\* Luke xii. 19.

† 1 Cor. viii. 1.

“ They leap at stars, and fasten in the  
mud ;  
At glory grasp, and sink in infamy.”

It is acknowledged that there is a kind of pleasure in letters or science, which is agreeable to human nature, calculated to raise the mind in contemplation of the great Creator's works and providences, and this pleasure is not so nearly allied to that of the unreasonable and brute creatures as many others. There is also a pleasure to be received in moral and social duties, understanding the science of ethics, and acquainting ourselves with the principles of theology: some take a singular delight in frequenting churches, sacraments, sermons; in reading the scriptures, in alms, prayers, confessions, and the like. It must be confessed that the persons pursuing these courses for *happiness*, have a far more refined taste than the voluptuary or sensualist, and that these things are commendable in themselves, and come nearer to the central point of *happiness*, in as much as they lean further from sensuality. But these are not the *chief good*, but only the outward dress and trimmings, as it were, of it; and many or all of them may be found in the most unhappy, and cannot therefore be true *felici-*



*ty*: this happy state of mind is not confined to any one condition in human life, for whether we are in our persons healthy or diseased, our fortunes rich or poor, it is all one, for in every condition of life we may obtain the chief good, and for that reason be no strangers to *happiness*.

HAPPINESS TO BE FOUND IN TRUE RELIGION,  
AND THE MEANS TO OBTAIN IT.

HAVING sought after *felicity* where it is not, it remains that we search for it where it is to be found. All mankind have a natural and ardent thirst for it: and whence arises this desire, or from what cause? It may be presumed from this, God created them to enjoy that in which *true happiness* consists, they by disobedience have separated themselves from it, and never can enjoy *true felicity* till they come in possession of it again. Some define this to be our greatest good, and some our *chief end*; and others that which alone can satisfy all our desires: all this and much more is true, and yet we are none the wiser, for the question is still what this wonderful thing is, in which all these excellent properties are to be found: in this it is like as it is with a way-faring man, who being ask-

ed whither he is going, answers one I am going to my journey's end, and to another, I am going where my business lieth; and to a third, I am going to a place, which when I come to, I need go no further. All this may be true, and yet he hath not told where he is going. If he was to say, I am going to Philadelphia, New-York, or Boston, he would satisfy the enquirer. But now it remains to be specific, and shew what *true happiness* consists in, without any farther prolixity.

If we would find real *happiness*, we must seek for it in true *religion*, in the knowledge of God, and in an earnest expectation of future bliss. All things upon the earth are little, narrow, and short in their duration; but every thing in religion is vast and infinite, calculated to make the soul *happy* who possesses it: what can be more so than to live always with God, and to have a perpetual joy flowing from him as the spring of life itself? Here as in a glass we behold the best and most desirable objects; its revelations refresh and bear up our spirits: we may with the most ravishing delights, lay out our whole thoughts upon heavenly things.... here we have the most healing remedies against all the miseries of human life, a relief for every agony of the mind, and a com-

fort in every time of distress ; whereas to be rich and honourable, to be wise and powerful, will never pacify one troubled thought, because they are only the creatures of fancy. But the principle of religion sinks deeper into our reason, and acquaints it with the glad tidings of a better life to come. *Religion* is useful in all conditions of life ; a comfort in prosperity, the greatest relief in adversity, a sure guide in health, and a faithful friend in affliction. It administers the most reviving cordials to the fainting soul, and prescribes such rules of life as will never fail, if they are carefully pursued, of their intended end ; neither can a religious man ever be disappointed in his faithful expectations, for God has promised him much more than has entered into his heart to conceive the greatness of.

Hence we may say of *religion*, it is pregnant with wisdom and happiness, it is admirably consonant to the desires, as well as the needs of *human nature*. It is this alone that answers to the marks laid down in the foregoing rules for judging what true happiness consists in. It is agreeable and proper to *human nature* ; it restores man to his true dignity ; it raises him above the level of the brute creation. But if he was to enjoy nothing but sensual pleasures,

wherein would his happiness exceed theirs. But this *religion* makes us partake of the likeness of our Maker ; it is the most superexcellent in its kind ; the *pearl of great price*,\* the *treasure hid in a field* ; † the *piece of silver that was lost* ; and it is comparable to gold, yea, to fine gold.

And further, it is that which can give full contentment of mind without any other enjoyment abstract from it, for if we are possessed of this, and destitute of every thing else, we may feel ourselves happy. If we were stripped of all our earthly property, like Job we could say, *the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* ‡ If in addition to this, we were afflicted in the manner that he was with the most grievous and painful disease, we might say with him, *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.* || In the enjoyment of religion alone, a rational mind can feel satisfaction sufficient to compensate him amply for

\* Matt. xiii. 44. 46. † Luke xv. 9.

‡ Job i. 21. || Job xix. 25.

all the pains and trouble he has been at, either to attain or retain this invaluable treasure.

It is also that which may be attained by the children of men in spite of every opposing enemy; if they can but obtain their own consent. It is a blessing also that is in their own power (as moral agents) to keep, through all the changes of fortune, and the evil designs of wicked men, for *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.\** As it cannot be obtained without our own consent, so neither can it be wrested from us, without our taking an active part in it.

This *religion* is agreeable to the faculties of men; infinitely serviceable to the content and tranquility of the mind; it is such a thing as every wise man would chuse as most becoming the dignity of a rational

being, and most conducive to his felicity. It rids the mind of all irksome and vexatious thoughts; exempts men from the troubles and tumults of disquieting passions : It frees the conscience of all sad reflections, disarms death of his terrors, and gives them a fair prospect of the kingdom of heaven beyond the grave : Yea, it is the greatest spring of joy and pleasure, it makes them godlike, as well in the happiness as in the purity of their lives. In short it has all the amiable and exalted qualities in it, calculated to prevail on the reason and affections of mankind.

Having defined *religion* to be the only vehicle of *true happiness*, it remains to shew what *pure religion* is ; for this may be counterfitted as well as *happiness* itself. As there are thousands who are contenting themselves with an imaginary felicity, like the fool in the gospel, saying to their souls, ye have *much goods laid up in store for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry* ; so there are thousands, it is to be feared, who are resting satisfied upon their bare conceits and notions about *religion*, and when they come to die, will find themselves as miserably undeceived as that rich farmer, when the voice came like thunder bursting over his head, *thou fool, this night*

*thy soul shall be required of thee,\** who instead of entering the ambrosial fields of paradise, and walking the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, as they have fondly hoped for and expected, must find a wide entrance through the gates of hell, into the blackness of darkness for ever.

Then it is a matter of infinite importance that we be convinced, of what the nature of *true religion* is ; for happiness is not to be found in our false notions of it, but in real *religion* itself. If we should build our hopes upon names, baptisms, or forms, we shall be like the *foolish man which built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell ; and great was the fall of it.†* A name, or belonging to a Christian society will not save us, for the apostle expressly declares, that *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,‡* but the name of Christ. It is not our baptism that will save us, for Simon Magus was baptized with water, and afterwards had neither part nor lot in the matter ; and the apostle

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\* Luke xii. 19, 20. † Matt. vii. 26. 27.

‡ Acts iv. 12.

perceived that he was *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*.\* It is not our going through a few ceremonies or rounds of duty that will constitute us the favourites of heaven, for *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*:† And says the apostle again, *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*:‡ Those webs of our own spinning can never be woven into a garment that will recommend us when Christ shall examine his guests: those ladders of our own contriving are not sufficient to enable us to climb up to true *felicity*.

*Religion* is an union with God and a participation of his divine nature: But is he the Potter and we the clay? is he the benefactor and we the pensioners? and is he the sovereign and we the subjects? then, as we stand in these different relations to him, in order that this union may be continued, and this nature be enjoyed, we must act in subordination to his will and divine precepts, and cheerfully resign to his righteous providences and disposals, saying in the lar-

\* Acts viii. 23.      † Rom. iii. 20.

‡ Titus iii. 5.



guage of our Saviour, *not my will but thine be done.*\* The whole of our troubles and distresses of mind arise from our opposition to our Maker: this union with himself is what he originally intended for man; but by setting up our own wills as the governing principle of the soul, we have deprived ourselves of that union in which alone our proper dignity and *true happiness* consists.

This is what we understand by *pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father*;† our Lord explains it in different words, but the same in effect, viz. *thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*‡ But as mankind are naturally destitute of this *religion*, the right of giving it is a prerogative that God has reserved to himself alone, and bestows it upon none, only upon certain conditions: these are pointed out clearly in the books of the Old and New Testament.

The *first*, is a deep and conscious conviction of our guilt, of the multitude and magnitude of our crimes, that from our very childhood we have *gone away from his ordinan-*

\* Luke xxii. 42. † James i. 27.

‡ Matt. xxii. 37. 39.

*ces and have not kept them;\** and that those crimes have been committed against the clearest light and the greatest goodness; this occasions the most unfeigned humility of soul, and self-abasement at the feet of the Almighty, and when our eyes are thus opened to see things in their true light, we discover the greatness and terribleness of God, in whose sight angels fall down with reverence, and devils fear and tremble; we view him as filling the unlimited bounds of space with his presence, *high as heaven what can we do; deeper than hell, what can we know;† upholding all things by the word of his power,‡* and by the hand of his providence, as the common Father and Benefactor of all: taking notice of the most minute parts of his workmanship, providing for the lilies of the field, and clothing them with greater beauty, than king Solomon possessed in all his glory, providing for the young ravens when they cry, and although two sparrows are sold for a farthing, not one of them falls to the ground without his notice, and that even the *very hairs of our heads are all numbered by him.*|| We not only view his benignity, manifested to those

\* Mal. iii. 7.      † Job xi. 8.

‡ Heb. i. 3.      || Matt. vi. 26. 27..

minute creatures, but particularly to the children of men ; that he feeds and clothes us continually, and protracts our breath every moment, has cast our lines unto us *in pleasant places*, and has given us a *goodly heritage*.\* But above all, he *so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*†

Then if we contrast our own littleness with his greatness, and our own vileness with his goodness ; it is enough to bring us down into the dust before him, to say with *Isaiah, woe is me for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts.*‡ The command of God is, *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*|| *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*\*\* But this humility does not consist in outward appearance only, but it is a principle in the heart, produced by a knowledge of ourselves : the opposites to this are *self-conceit, vain glory, haughtiness of spirit, highmindedness, spi-*

\* Psal. xvi. 6. † John iii. 16. ‡ Isa. vi. 5.

|| James iv. 10. \*\* 1 Peter v. 6.

*ritual pride, &c.* but humility strips us of those great conceits we have had of our persons and performances; by it we are brought to think diminutively of ourselves, and that if we have received or done any good, all the glory belongs to him from whom every good and perfect gift is derived. It teaches us to pry less into our neighbours faults and more into our own, in opposition to the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, who could behold *the mote in their brother's eye*, but did not consider *the beam in their own eye*.\* It makes us speak more sparingly of our own excellencies, and more charitably of others. It brings us to mourn over and bewail our manifold sins, and to exclaim against ourselves like Paul, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death*.†

There are some whose lives have been upright, to outward appearance, having never run into those excesses of riot with many others; who, nevertheless, when they have had a discovery of themselves, in their true light, have been brought to exclaim against themselves, as the greatest sinners that ever God suffered to live; *rivers*

\* Matt. vii. 3.

† Rom. vii. 24.

*of tears* have run down their *cheeks* while they poured their mournful complaints into the compassionate bosom of their offended Lord, like Peter, when *he went out and wept bitterly*,\* invoking God in language similar to this, O God! I need not tell thee how many or how great my sins have been, for thou hast been about my paths and about my bed, and spied out all my ways. Thou art equally acquainted with those evils that have been lying dormant in the heart, buried up and concealed from the eyes of an observing world, as well as those perpetrated upon the house top. I do not come to inform thee that I have sinned, for thou knowest *what is in man*,† with every thought, and imagination of the heart, but in obedience to thy command, I come confessing my sins, believing that thou art *faithful and just to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness*.‡

One, under thorough awakenings, is ready to cry out, I deserve a thousand hells. It would be just in thee to drive me into the regions of darkness, and cover me with a thick cloud of thy wrath forever, and number me with the hopeless and despairing

\* Matt. xxvi. 75.      † John ii. 25.

‡ 1 John i. 9.

damned—I am a terror to myself—my sins are like a gathering storm around me, and like a sulphureous cloud above me, from whence thunders roar and lightnings blaze, and portend eternal calamities. Where shall my trembling soul flee to escape the impending stroke?—it is thou that I have offended, and it is thy wrath that I dread; for there is no escaping thy hand. *If I ascend up into heaven, lo, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee;\** wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? shall I present unto thee thousands of rams or ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?† Is there no help—no hope? Whither shall I be-

\* Psal. cxxxix. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

† Mich. vi. 6, 7.

take myself for shelter, or succour? *O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night,\** because I have sinned against thee. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.

When our eyes are thoroughly opened, and we are brought thus to our senses to behold our lost and undone estate, and that there is no escaping the presence of God, nor paying the debt due to divine justice, we feel willing to have our names cast out as evil; that men should esteem us the off-scouring of all things, to do and even to suffer any thing, so that we may glorify God, and be saved upon any conditions.

We are not then for confining God to our own terms, and prescribing certain rules, by which he shall save us, but we cry out, like the jailor, when the terrors of God set themselves, in dread array before him, all trembling as he was, *what must I do to be saved?\** or like Saul of Tarsus, when he was going with a blood-thirsty spirit to Damascus, and that powerful Jesus whom he had persecuted, met him on the way, and smote him to the ground, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?\** and then, when he was a

\* Jer. ix. 1. † Acts xvi. 30. ‡ Acts ix. 6.

little recollected, and knew who it was that spake, he said, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* we are made willing to *cut off our right hand* and to *pluck out our right eye*, and cast them *from us*,\* i. e. to break off from every sin, even if they are as pleasing and as profitable to us as either of these; and also to follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth,† however great the cross may be; yea, if it should be contrary to the inclination of father, mother, wife, or children, and all our near and dear connections in life, we must seek to please Christ in preference to any of these.

We are made willing to renounce *the hidden things of dishonesty*,‡ with all *superfluity of naughtiness*, and to *receive with meekness the ingrafted word* || of life. We clearly discover that a round of outward duties will not bring us into the possession of that *pearl of great price*. *But to this man will I look*, saith God, *even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word:*\*\* and *he saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*†† He delighteth more in a broken heart than in the blood of bullocks and of rams; for

\* Matt. v. 29. 30.      † Rev. xiv. 4.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 2.      || Jam. i. 21.

\*\* Isai. lxvi. 2.      †† Psal. xxxiv. 18.



nothing but a deep and unfeigned sorrow for sin will answer: under this work of repentance we feel as if we would be willing to part with houses and lands, and all other conveniencies of life, and live in a sequestered state, from all our circle of acquaintances in some solitary wilderness or lonely place, if it was required, or even to endure corporeal punishment for the sins we have committed against so good and merciful a God; we then freely offer up all our Babylonish garments and golden wedges; all our Agags are at once destroyed; we come with submissive wills—with humbled spirits—with broken hearts; and, with our tearful eyes lifted up towards heaven, crying out with the publican *God be merciful to me a sinner!*\* or like Peter, *Lord save me† or I perish*; or as the blind men did, *have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David*;‡ and with the prodigal, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.*||

*Secondly.* We are now made sensible that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saveth us by the washing of regeneration

\* Luke xviii. 13.

† Mat. xiv. 30.

‡ Matt. xx. 30.

|| Luke xv. 12, 19.

*and renewing of the Holy Ghost.\** There is no work that we have done, that deserves God's favour or blessing; for our lives have been a scene of rebellion, one continued course of wickedness, and we have merited the vengeance of God more than his favour: and even if we have done some good deeds to ourselves and our fellow-creatures, yet the probability is that these have sprung from dissingenuous motives, either from pride or a desire of applause, or to gain some secular advantage: and admitting that they were done from the purest intention, there is nothing meritorious in an action; our good deeds can never make any satisfaction to divine Justice, or compensate for the least sin that ever we have committed; as Elihu said in his speech to Job, *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth he of thine hand? thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.†* But our righteousness can never profit God, he can derive no personal advantage from any good action that we can perform.

If salvation was by the works of the law, then Christ need not to have died, but to repeat the apostle's words, it is *not by works*

\* Titus iii. 5.

† Job. xxxv. 7, 8.

*of righteousness that we have done, but by his mercy he saveth us, &c. There is nothing less than the blood of Christ, as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,\* can atone for our sins, or recommend us to God; and this will be the song of the faithful in heaven, unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.†* And this blood of atonement never will be applied to the washing us from our sins, unless we believe *with a heart unto righteousness.‡*

This faith is a simple dependence on the promise of God, through his son; a giving credit to his veracity, as well as his divine ability to save; that what he has promised, he is both able and willing to perform. *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him.||* That we have as much power to believe, as we have to repent, in a proper manner before God, we presume will not be disputed, if we attend

\* Rev. xiii. 8.      † Rev. i. 5, 6.

‡ Rom. x. 10.      || Matt. vii. 11.

to a few particulars: it is altogether out of our power to repent, without being first deeply convicted of our lost and undone estate, and this conviction is totally a work of the Spirit upon our hearts; so we cannot believe to our justification, without first having the fallow ground of our hearts broken up by repentance, without feeling a proper humiliation of soul, on account of our sins; taking the one step paves the way for the other, so we ought to ascribe glory to the unmerited grace of God, for the whole work of our salvation, from the beginning to its consummation.

But although this whole work is effected by the assisting grace of God, yet this need not be an excuse for any to neglect it; for we do not learn from the sacred oracles, that he ever withholds this assistance from any, unless they absolutely refuse to yield to its sacred emotions, and say in their hearts, we will not have this man to reign over us.\* In such cases he sometimes leaves them to a judicial blindness, as he did the pharisees, who shut their eyes against *the light*. But he always stands ready to do his needy creatures good, whenever they are willing to receive good at his hand.

\* Luke xix. 14.

That repentance is an act of the creature, we cannot doubt: although it is impossible to repent without the grace of conviction first, yet we are informed that *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.\** And the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.† Which implies that God has given us sufficient ability and has left it to our own choice whether or no we will repent, and has made this one of the main conditions of our acceptance, *repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.‡* Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,|| &c. Now he commandeth all men every where to repent.\*\* And except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.††

Now if repentance is acknowledged to be an act of the creature, surely then faith must be also, and to say to the contrary

\* 1 Cor. xii. 7.

† Titus ii. 11, 12.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

|| Acts iii. 19.

\*\* Acts xvii. 30.

†† Luke xiii. 5.

would be a species of antinomianism; some wait for *faith* the same as the impotent man waited for some one to put him into the pool, when the water was troubled, or as though it was to come upon them like a flash of lightning from a distant cloud, as though they were to be as passive in it as they were in the gift of the *woman's seed, who was to bruise the serpent's head.\** And the constant cry of such an one is, give me faith, give me faith, as though God was to believe in, or for them. One ingeniously observes, "*faith* is no more the gift of the God of grace, than seeing is the gift of the God of nature." The God of nature gives us light to see in, and organs to see with, but we may hinder ourselves from seeing in different ways; we may hide in some dark room or cellar, we may put a veil over our faces, or shut our eyes against the light, and so not be benefitted by it, although it shines all around us: so God has given us his beloved Son, as the Saviour of the world, and his divine promises to believe in, and sufficient power to believe with, then it remains for us to exercise the grace and ability given, and believe to the saving of our souls.

\* Gen. iii. 15.

Believing and disbelieving are the grand conditions upon which our *salvation* and *damnation* are suspended. If *believing* was not our own act, and optional with us whether to do it or leave it undone, why would it be said, *he that believeth not shall be damned*.\* What! will God anathematise and damn the souls of men eternally, for not doing what is out of their power to do? this would be making the conditions of the gospel, harder than the conditions of the law, for the law given to Adam only required perfect human obedience. But if faith is the gift of God, and not an act of the creature, in the manner it is held out by some, then the gospel requires us to do the work of an Almighty God, or that which none but God can do for us, and then binds the sentence of eternal damnation upon us, for not doing what we have never had an ability to perform: this certainly can never be admissible, we must view it in a different light.

We have already observed that no one can believe with that *faith* which justifies the ungodly, unless the foundation of repentance is first laid, for otherwise it would preclude the necessity of repentance altogether; then when the work of contrition

\* Mark xvi. 16.

is wrought in the heart, and we feel ourselves to be lost<sup>†</sup> and undone sinners, we are informed in scripture, that *the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.\** Herein we discover him to be a Saviour suited to our necessity, do we feel ourselves to be condemned and guilty, we are told *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.†* Are we filled with the most poignant grief and sorrow of heart, It is said, *surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.‡* Or are we pressed down with an intolerable weight of sin, *as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves,||* the promise is, *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.\*\** So that in short Christ is made unto us every thing that we need, and it only remains for us to believe this *with a heart unto righteousness,* and then we shall be brought into a happy state. Christ has paid the price that divine justice demanded ; Christ has borne the stroke due to the sins of the whole world, and Christ has reconciled God to man : now says the

\* Luke xix. 10.    † 2 Cor. v. 19.    ‡ Isa. liii. 4.  
 || Amos. ii. 13.       \*\* Matt. xi. 28.



apostle, *we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.\** The grand point is, for man to come to a reconciliation with his Maker, (i. e.) to be reconciled to the plan of salvation by simple faith alone in his Son.

Then when we find ourselves arrested as insolvent debtors, we can do nothing else but believe ourselves exonerated from every claim, and acquitted from all the demands of justice, in virtue of the price paid by the Son of God. When we behold the impending stroke of God's awakened displeasure, ready to light upon our wretched souls for ever—in this situation we can do nothing, but believe that Christ stepped in between the Father's wrath and us, for *it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief, when his soul was made an offering for sin.†* Then he has borne this justice himself! and we are made free! The moment we can venture to believe this, our burdens will drop off—our consciences will be acquitted from every clamorous charge against us—an intercourse will be opened between heaven and our souls, and we shall behold the *glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.‡*

\* 2 Cor. v. 20.      † Isa. liii. 10.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

The vilest sinner within the reach of mercy that lives, if he feels himself lost and undone, and comes to God, with a broken heart, and can by any means persuade himself thus to venture on Christ and believe that he is acquitted before the Father, for what Jesus has done and suffered, will feel immediately the answer of peace, and *the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost*.\* We are apt to believe that we SHALL be acquitted, and that God WILL be reconciled ; but it remains for us to believe that we ARE acquitted, and that God is now reconciled ; for the work of redemption does not remain to be done, it is already effected. It was finished when Christ Jesus expired on the cross; and the only reason that keeps a broken hearted penitent from feeling this reconciliation, is his disbelieving what God has so positively declared ; all that God charges him with in this state, is his unbelief ; and as soon as this is done away, then every bar of hindrance is removed, and God is well pleased with him through Christ.

But some sincere souls may labour under the impression, that it would be presumption for them to believe in the manner described : we might ask, what other way of believing

is there? View it in what point of light we will, can faith be any thing else? is it presumption then to obey the command of God? rather is it not greater presumption to doubt of his veracity, and to continue in unbelief, which is a breach of that plain command, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*\*

Satan avails himself of any art or device, to keep poor souls fast bound in the chains and fetters of unbelief; he would fain make them believe their duty to be a sin, and represent the adorable Father of the spirits of all flesh to be a liar, like man, altogether mutable and guilty of duplicity, declaring and promising, without a sincere intention to perform what he has promised. Timorous souls are very apt to be afraid of deceiving themselves if they believe; true if they believe without repentance, with an antinomian, dead faith, they will surely be deceived: but if they are truly humbled and broken-hearted penitents, they cannot believe too soon: now only take notice, God on the one hand makes it our duty, and commands us to believe; and it is the business of Satan on the other hand, to keep us in unbelief.

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\* Acts xvi. 31.

Judge then, are we more likely to be deceived by obeying God, than we are by listening to the suggestions of the adversary of God and man, surely not; therefore we need wait no longer, for we cannot make ourselves any fitter for divine mercy, and if we attempt to do it, this will only be offering an insult to the Redeemer of the world, as though his blood was not sufficient to reconcile us to God. Let us cast away all idea of merit, and strip ourselves of every plea, only, *this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.\** And *when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.†* That *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.‡* So that every serpent-bitten Israelite, all who feel the invenomed poison of the sting of death, all that are sensible of the many deadly wounds that are made deep in their consciences; and all who feel their painful bruises from the crown of the head, to the soles of their feet, may here find a healing remedy for all their maladies; only by looking at the

\* Tim. i. 15. † Rom. v. 6. ‡ John iii. 14, 15.

bleeding Lamb of God upon the cross, *look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.\**

But a very common objection made to this doctrine of faith is, “How can we believe before we feel the witness.” Those persons surely mistake the nature of justifying faith altogether, for the witness of the spirit is the effect, and this justifying faith is the cause; for we cannot receive any blessing of this nature, only through the medium of faith; can we then reasonably expect the effect to be produced before the cause? this would be contrary to every rule of common sense, and can by no means be admitted; for if the witness of the spirit may be obtained, and the blessing received, before we believe or rely on the merits of Christ, and trust in the veracity of God; this goes to exclude the necessity of that faith which justifies the ungodly altogether. True, after we receive the inward witness, we have the assurance, and can say with the prophet, *though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.†* It is this which enables us to say, *we know that we have passed from death unto life,‡* &c. but it is a reliance on

\* Isa. xlv. 22. † Isa. xii. 1. ‡ 1 John iii. 14.

the goodness and mercy of God, that begets this assurance.

A striking proof of the efficacy of faith we have in the instance of the man with the withered hand, who came to our Lord. *Stretch forth thine hand,\** said Jesus; now if the man had been as incredulous as many of us, he would have replied, why Lord thou knowest that my arm is withered, and how can I stretch it forth, dost thou demand impossibilities? heal it for me first, and then I will stretch it out, and believe that thou art able to perform the cure; but we do not read of any such scruples in his mind, for he believed that he who commanded him to do it, would give him sufficient power, although in some sense, contrary to human probability: he made the attempt and it was done unto him according to his faith, his arm was made whole like unto the other from that very hour. God never gives a command, but where he gives power to comply with it, and whenever we make the attempt and do what we can, the chief that he requires is a willing mind, and then he will assist our infirmities, and we shall be enabled to believe to the saving of our souls.

\* Mark iii. 5.

Then we need not be a great while in obtaining religion, as though we were to receive it by the merit of our own works, neither need we say, *who shall ascend into heaven, (that is to bring Christ down from above) or who shall descend into the deep, (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead) but what saith it, the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.\**

These are the two main conditions of the gospel, and calculated to bring us into a state of *happiness*, for it may be noticed that a man never can enjoy *true felicity* until a thorough revolution takes place in his nature, till self and sin are overcome, perverse nature mortified, and our stubborn wills subdued: as pride and unbelief were the two first sins, and are the reigning evils that predominate in the unchanged heart—The first condition, viz. humility or repentance, is the opposite to pride, and designed to extirpate it from the soul, root

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\* Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, 9.

and branch. And the second condition, viz. faith, is opposite to our unbelief, and calculated to exterminate it totally from the heart.

Now it is, having complied with those conditions, we have our sins blotted out,\* and our souls justified;† the work of regeneration wrought in the heart,‡ and are translated from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, into the liberty of the children of God. This we call *religion*; but as long as we are in this world, we are in danger of being overcome by those busy enemies, *pride* and *unbelief*: for they may be considered as the root from which all other evils grow; so that if we can get a thorough mastery over them, a complete revolution will be made in our natures, and a foundation will be laid for *true and permanent happiness*. But as long as we are under the influence of these evils, our whole souls are out of tune, we are under the dominion of sinful passions and propensities. Our passions being altogether disorganized, give our souls a wrong bias or a false taste, and prevent them from desiring or pursuing those objects that are suitable to rational nature, and calculated to inspire the mind

\* Acts iii. 19. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ John iii. 3. 5. 7.



with *true felicity*. Then in order to our *happiness*, that we may retain religion, and always be doing the thing that is right, it is as necessary that our *passions* should be duly regulated, as it is that the different parts of machinery in a watch, should operate in unison, or be properly regulated in order that she may point to the time of day.

*A right government of ourselves, and an improvement of our mental faculties, necessary to happiness, and that we may act up to the dignity of true religion.*

I. THAT we may be successful in this work of self-government, the foul weeds of *pride*, *malice*, and *envy*, must be rooted out of our hearts ; for these are totally devilish, and did not originally belong to human nature ; and as much of them as we possess, so many diabolical dispositions still cleave to our souls. But the three primitive passions (as some call them) viz, *admiration*, *love*, and *hatred*, were originally designed for our service, and add the truest *dignity*, as well as the greatest *happiness*, to our souls, if they are properly managed ; but in their vitiated state, while under the dominion of sin, they introduce confusion into our consciences, irregularity in our lives,

and misery both in this world and the next : so that the soul may be said to be subject to as many disorders as the body, and by nature is covered over with *wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores : they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.\**

These three primitive *passions* are the spring from which all others, in some way, take their rise ; and hence they are called derivative : admiration is excited by something new or strange—love, by something that has the appearance of good—and hatred, by that which is supposed to be evil. If these gently move us, we call them affections ; if more strongly, they are called passions ; but if more boisterously, they are named perturbations : so that these are one thing, called by three names, according to that degree of heat into which they put us.

Virtue and knowledge will be necessary to hold the bridle and govern their motions, to allay their heat, if they be too violent, and raise them, if they be too low. The one that has but little knowledge, his admiration and wonder will be raised at almost every trivial circumstance, and sometimes when things happen a little out of the com-

\* Isa. i. 6.

mon way, his wonder will rise even to astonishment—things, that a man of extensive knowledge would scarcely take notice of. True, there are many phenomena, that occasion the admiration of the ablest philosophers, but if the mind is well stocked with information, we shall not meet with so many new things to excite our admiration, or to be wondered at. This kind of knowledge is particularly necessary to set bounds to the raging of our passions, when they are heightened by earthly things; but a measure of divine knowledge, or heavenly virtue, is also necessary, in order to raise our cold affections to heavenly things; for in consequence of our depravity, we are not so much affected with things of this nature, as we are with sensible objects: it is necessary also, that we may discern that which is truly wonderful, viz. the wisdom and goodness of God in the creating of all things out of nothing, and in the redemption of fallen creatures from sin and misery, and in all the great and glorious things that are revealed to us in the gospel, some of which angels desired to look into.

Knowledge is also necessary in the regulation of our love and hatred, because, for want of it, we may be led to love that which is evil, supposing there is good in it, and

hate that which is truly good, attaching to it some ideas of evil ; and by these means be altogether in confusion and disorder. We read of some who hate *the light*, and of others who love *darkness* ;\* now this love and hatred spring from their ignorance of the nature of both light and darkness ; but this knowledge teaches us to place our supreme love on God, as the source of all good : And here our love may be heightened into adoration, and we are to love all creatures in subordination to our supreme love to him ; we are to endeavour to love every thing so far as it bears a relation to, and represents the image or wisdom of the great Creator (i. e.) of things in this world : then Christians are next in our affections, to God, because they stand in the nearest relation to him, and possess most of his image ; being not only created and redeemed by him in common with others, but also adopted into his family, and made *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*.† We may love them with the love of unity or fellowship as children of the same father, and engaged in the same interests with ourselves. Next to these the whole human race that are within the reach of mercy, the

\* John iii. 19, 20.

† Rom. viii. 17.

vilest of them, and even our enemies are to share in our affections: Our Lord says, *love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.\** We are to exercise compassion towards, and love them with the love of pity and commiseration: and next we are to feel an affection for all other creatures, as far as they shew forth the wisdom and perfections of the Almighty. If we were to regulate our passions according to this system, then we should be freed from a thousand inordinate affections; such as an excessive love of money, which the apostle calls, the *root of all evil*, and an over fondness for meats and drinks; which would be an excellent antidote against gluttony and drunkenness, as well as a thousand other snares which inordinate love leads men into.

As we have already observed, we are to love all the creatures of God, so that none of them are to be the objects of our hatred; but we are only to hate that which fits itself

\* Matt. v. 44, 45.

up in opposition to our Maker, for his interest ought to be ours; sin is that principle; therefore we are to hate it with a perfect hatred. If we are tolerated to hate any body, it is ourselves, in opposition to that self-love which leads so many to destruction, like Job, to *abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes*,\* for the many great and crying sins that we have committed against so good and merciful a God, who hath *fed us all our lives long unto this day, and redeemed us from all evil*.†

Let us bend all those lawful and useful passions of *love, desire, joy, fear, anger, sorrow*, and the like, to the duties of religion, and in this holy exercise let us foster them as the husbandman does the tender shoots in his vineyard, and prune off all their luxuriant branches, keep them continually under the controul of reason and the word of God, and also watch against their wanderings and out-breakings; let wisdom be like a bridle upon them, when they are unruly or headstrong; that we may guide them on like a well-managed horse, through all the various paths of human life, that they may help us on to duty and happiness.

\* Job lxii. 6.

† Gen. lxviii. 15, 16.

If we would get the government over all our unruly *passions*, let us learn and practise the art of self-denial, with regard to our *appetites* of every kind, and then we shall gain an easier government over them. Passion has its chief seat in animal nature, and is called by some the soul's sensations of some commotions in animal nature, arising from the perception of particular objects: indeed they may be said to be sensible commotions of both soul and body; then, in order that we may effectually check those evil motions that too often arise in our hearts, let us subdue the flesh, mortify it, and bring it under subjection, in order to rule the spirit; for a pampered appetite supplies the unruly passions with new force, vigour, and obstinacy, and effectually prevents an exercise of the graces of moderation and temperance, which graces if practised, add very much to the dignity and happiness of human beings.

A man, who means to maintain his integrity, and live a truly religious and happy life, must guard carefully against putting the reins in the hands of passion, or being in any measure under their controul; for they are blind things at best, and *if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.\** And as

\* Matt. xv. 14. which scripture may apply to blind passions as well as to blind ministers.

far as we are under the guidance of passion, so far we misjudge all the objects of them ; for they colour all these with very deep shades, viz. the objects of our *admiration or surprise*; the objects of our *love, affection, or desire*, and the objects of our *hatred, anger, or aversion*; and so of the rest. As these are such blind guides, we are to keep them, at all times, under the control of reason, which may be called the eye of the soul ; for if they should at any time over leap these bounds, they might be like so many bedlamites, breaking loose from their confinement. There is no knowing how much evil we may sustain, or how much mischief may be done by them ; for, says Solomon, *He that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls* :\* it may be noticed, that they are not only blind, but also depraved, and inclined to evil more than good ; this is one reason why we should keep a continual watch over them : our reason is also very much depraved and darkened, and cannot therefore be a safe guide, only as far as it acts in subordination to the revealed word of God.

II. The next thing that comes under our notice, is the cultivation of our *rational*

\* Prov. xxv. 28.



*powers* ; for unless we improve our mental faculties, we may in vain hope for victory over our inferior appetites ; for there is nothing else can compel them to desist from their wonted gratifications, but the superior force of reason. The man who does not try to improve his genius, by pursuing some useful branch of knowledge, will always be employed in something idle ; for the mind of man is an active principle, and if not bent to profitable pursuits, will be exercising itself on things trifling ; hence a wide inroad for temptation ; and such a man's mind is comparable to a field, without a sufficient inclosure, which the cattle, from the adjacent farms, from its easy access, break into, and destroy the crop of the indolent husbandman. This man certainly unfits himself not only for the duties of religion, but also for the common duties of human life, and renders himself a kind of useless being upon earth ; yea, worse than useless, for instead of standing as a neutral, or doing any good, his unchecked appetites and his untutored mind, lead him to do a great deal of harm, both to himself and others.

That we may act up to the dignity of rational beings, our minds ought to be a kind of *empire*, where laws of justice should be established ; and if our wills should con-

federate with and consent to the solicitations of the inferior appetites, then conscience should be the plaintiff, and also the arbiter, memory should be the book of common laws, and reason sit as the judge, and pass sentence according to the verdict of conscience, upon will, the criminal, as he is the ringleader in all the mischief, seeing that without his consent the rest could not act, and bind him and his accomplices with the strong ties of duty and revelation, and keep them in perpetual confinement, that they may never do the like again.

Then, that our reason may be duly cultivated, we may read various authors, hear gospel sermons, and enter into conversation with men of experience: we do not mean though by searching various authors, that we should run into astronomical and philosophical researches, or trace the tedious annals of profane history, or the perplexing labyrinths of dead languages, and the like; these kinds of knowledge we may, or we may not obtain; but let us take heed, while we are grasping for this tree of knowledge, that we do not lose the tree of life. This wisdom, being but human, serves to puff up and swell the heart with pride, unless it is that degree of it that is kept under the patronage of virtue: the wisdom that

serves to raise and elevate the affections to God, and to make us something like him, is what we would here recommend—It is what the apostle James calls *the wisdom that is from above—first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*\* It is what the wise man so earnestly recommends, “wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and, with all thy getting, get understanding; exalt her and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her; she shall give to thy head an ornament of grace, a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.”† Again says he, “happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold; she is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her; length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour; her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace; she is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon

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\* Jam. iii. 17.

† Prov. iv. 7, 8, 9.

her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.”\*

Let the books that we peruse be theological productions, and not merely to find out speculatives in divinity, but to improve our morals and to mend our hearts ; for diving much into theories and speculations often serve to confuse the head, render the heart insensible to every joyful and sacred emotion, and take away that sweetness of temper which is congenial with the loving mind, that was in Jesus Christ, and is by no means calculated to make us happy ; but it is necessary that we should have a consistent theory of religious principles, to keep us from being *carried about with every wind of doctrine* ;† for while the mind is in continual fluctuations and tossed upon the billows of a diversity of opinions, it cannot be in a state of *true felicity*. The apostle exhorts us to *prove all things*, and to *hold fast that which is good*.‡ Whatever books we read, or whatever sermons or conversation we hear, like the busy bee, let us be gathering honey from every opening flower ; or, like the fisherman, gathering all that is good into our repositories, and casting the bad away ;

\* Prov. iii. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. † Eph. iv. 14.

‡ 1 Thes. v. 21.

remembering to separate between the precious and the vile. The memory may be considered as the store-house of the soul, and, if we act wisely, we will not crowd and burden it with trumpery, such as novels, romances, and the like, which are a great deal better forgotten than learned.

III. That our reason may be properly informed, let us devote ourselves to the scriptures of truth, to imbibe the heavenly sentiments therein contained, and deposit this sacred treasure up in our memories. *Search the scriptures*, says our Lord, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me* :\* here we may find the best information, the most sublime sentiments, the purest doctrines, and the greatest chain of harmony and consistency, with a variety of other properties, suited to our necessities : it is *like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces* ; † it is *quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* : ‡ in it are peals of dreadful thunder, roaring from Sinai's mount ;

\* John v. 29.      † Jer. xxiii. 29.

‡ Heb. iv. 12.

threatening us with devastation on the one hand, to drive us like the avenger's sword, to the only city of refuge; and, on the other, there is a stained cross, an agonizing Jesus, and the most soothing balmy promises, like so many cords drawing us on in the pleasant way of duty and happiness, and hastening our escape from the stormy wind and tempest: there is a certain energy attending the word, that carries a conviction along with it, to every reader, that its origin is divine.

Human reason, without the superior aid of revelation, is not capable of finding out evangelical or heavenly truths; for we are born into the world depraved and ignorant of every thing, both human and divine: knowledge is communicative, and may I not say that all we receive is by sense and revelation. As we are made up of various sensations, we are capable of realizing many sensible objects around us, and noticing their colours, shapes, proportions, &c. but of knowing nothing of their intrinsic properties, or those parts of them that lie concealed from our view, or that are not objects of sense: and hence we discover the necessity of revelation; by revelation here, we mean any account, information, or testimony we have received from another, of a circumstance

or thing that has not been an object of sense to us ; and all such revelations must be through the medium of analogy, for we are not adequate to understand any such information, only by adverting to something of the kind, or some way resembling it, which we have either heard of, or seen before. By this kind of analogy, an image of the thing described, is portrayed before the imagination, the mind grasps and deposits it in the memory, and hence may we not say, all human knowledge is communicated through the organs of sight and hearing, or some of the other senses. The more we retain in our memories, of what we see, read of, and hear, the more our mental powers are enlarged, and the greater is our expansion of thought.

As man is not omnipresent, but is confined within a limited circle, he may conjecture a thousand things that never had, and perhaps never will have any existence ; but he is capable of determining the truth of nothing absent or foreign from him, only by the credibility of testimony ; then his reason is to be called into action, to determine whether this testimony is sufficiently credible for him to form his judgment upon respecting the truth of what has been revealed.

From this view of an improvement of our mental faculties, how necessary is it for youths to devote the morning of their days to the cultivating of their minds, before riper age comes upon them with its various infirmities; a weakened memory, and a loss of recollection: at which time they will be illy qualified to imbibe or investigate principles of truth; for we see old age very tenacious of what it has received in younger years, and indeed there is but very little probability that an old man will ever change the principles he has received in his youth, or alter his manner of life, unless it should be by supernatural grace alone—a mere miracle. For, *can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots, then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.\** Hence a foundation is laid in the education of youth for their future, and may we not say, their eternal destiny.

But to return to the insufficiency of human reason, to illuminate our path, or guide our unwearied steps, and point out evangelical truths to our minds, or to lead us through the mazes of error in this solitary wilderness; our reason is not able to teach us any thing only what it has been taught by the

\* Jer. xiii. 23.



means before mentioned. Reason was not given to us for a teacher, but only as a principle by which we may investigate the propriety or impropriety, the truth or the falsehood of what we are taught by comparison, or a reference to circumstances, the truth of which have been sufficiently obvious to our minds before.

For instance, our reason is not able to inform us of any circumstance relative to the North and South poles ; and why ? the reason is obvious, because no one has ever been in those places, to bring us information, and we are left only to conjecture from what we have either seen, or heard from persons who have tried to explore them, that they are cold regions of ice, &c. Our reason cannot teach us what things are now happening in Europe, Asia or Africa ; but the probability is, that we may gain some knowledge of them hereafter, by report or information. How should we (in this country) ever have been able to have known any thing of the peculiar situation of Egypt, of the overflowing of the Nile annually, by the abundance of rain falling in the upper country of Ethiopia : or of those wonderful pyramids, those prodigious monuments of antiquity, in that country : or how should we have known any thing of

the greatness, and of the destruction of old Babylon, if it had not been for information? How should we have known any thing of the geography of the world, if we had not seen maps, or read the history of it, and the like? indeed we are not capable of knowing any thing that happens in our own neighbourhood or family, unless we either see, or are informed of it in some way or other.

Then our boasted reason can teach us nothing, even of the things of this world; much less the great and important things of eternity. viz. what *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man*\* to conceive the greatness of; in matters of faith and religion, we are dependent solely upon the oracles of divine truth or revelation for instruction; some pretend that their reason teaches them that there is a God, and that it is their duty to pay homage to him. We may venture to deny the assertion that their reason alone teaches them any such thing, for if they had never been informed any thing concerning God, or their duty to him, neither by external nor internal revelation. i. e. by reading, hearing, or by the internal operations

\* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

of the grace of God upon the heart, they would have remained (in this world) as ignorant of his being, and character, as the brutes that perish.

But how came Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, and many of the Grecian sages, by their knowledge of God, and the moral duties? did not the principle of reason teach them those great lessons of truth which they distributed among others? To answer this query we need only to observe, their doctrines were partly true, and partly false, which supposes them partly human and partly divine, derived from information and conjecture; we do not pretend to say that their information was altogether correct, or that their conjectures were wholly falacious, but it is probable both the one and the other were partly right and partly wrong. The pure principles of truth can never suffer any alterations or additions from man, or pass through the foul hands of human reason, without tarnishing in a great measure their original lustre and beauty; for human beings (especially in their vitiated state) are made up of fallibility, and whatever they do, the stamp of weakness or imperfection is left upon it, as the signature of the author.

But to return to those Grecian philosophers, what information did they receive concerning the principles of theology? In the first place, they were men of great literary knowledge, they were also men, who were seeking for information from every quarter where it could be obtained. Plato was a considerable traveller, and as such had an opportunity, no doubt, of seeing some of the dispersed Jews or Israelites, whither they had been scattered into the different parts of the world; for he lived after the Jewish captivity. But it may be said, that their residence was confined among the Babylonians; granted, their residence was principally there, but no doubt there was a continual intercourse between those two countries, viz. Babylon and Greece; but the ten tribes who followed Jeroboam, and were not numbered among the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were taken captive and dispersed abroad among the different nations, round about; then we may reasonably conjecture, that as those people held principles of religion different from all other nations, that a person of Plato's prying turn of mind would be inquisitive to know something about them: and admitting that he himself had not an opportunity of seeing any of the seed of Jacob, who could con-

verse intelligibly about the great and momentous matters of religion, yet some of his associates or acquaintances, it is altogether likely, had ; and the philosopher, ever anxious to find out principles of truth, would doubtless eagerly grasp those small emanations of light, by whatever means he might receive them, and store them away carefully in his memory. It is not impossible but what he might have read the books of Moses and the prophets, or certain parts of them, transcribed into other languages, which he might have been acquainted with ; but, however, be these as they may, it is a well known fact, that Plato was one of Socrates' disciples, and derived a great many opinions from him. Whether Socrates had ever been conversant with any of the Jews or no, we cannot tell ; but according to his own account, as well as information from Plato himself, and others, there was a *Genius*, or, as they sometimes called it, a *Demon*, that attended him from his childhood, and taught him those truths that he revealed to others : charity may lead us to believe that this was a measure of that Spirit, *which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* ;\* for it is not an impossible thing,

\* John i. 9.

but what God might have made himself known, in a measure, to some of those philosophers in Greece, as well as to Balaam in the land of Moab.

And as to Aristotle, it is equally certain that he was one of Plato's pupils, and undoubtedly imbibed many of his sentiments of theology; and if we may credit information, there was a learned Jew in the city of Athens, who was an intimate acquaintance of his; with whom he had a number of conferences. And Seneca lived in a more favourable time yet, about the beginning of the Christian æra; and without doubt had an opportunity of conversing with Christians, and, in all probability of reading the evangelists and the apostles writings; and it has been said by some, that he held a correspondence with the apostle Paul: what foundation they had for this, we will not pretend to say; but he was put to death by Nero, and (in that country) consequently was surrounded by Christians during his life.

Admitting there was no external revelation, the operations of the Holy Ghost are sufficient alone to teach men a great many things of God, and his law; so that we are not to impute that to human reason, which is properly the effect of the enlightening

grace of God upon the heart. All pure principles of truth that we imbibe (of a heavenly nature) are revealed to us, either directly or indirectly, from God, who is the source of truth, and the fountain of light : so we ought to feel our dependance upon him for instruction, and to prize that instruction more highly than gold, yea, than fine gold.

As we have already observed, men are made up of weakness and fallibility, ignorant of a thousand dangers that they are now exposed to, and more so of what lies before them ; every thing in futurity is buried in mystery, a thick cloud is before it which we cannot penetrate ; therefore it is *not in man that walketh to direct his steps*,\* for if we go the way that carnal reason would point out, we are like a blind man who is as likely to fall into a pit or ditch as to keep in a safe course. But he who flies to God's word for instruction, has a lighted candle in his hand, to guide him through all the darksome wilds of this world, and knows how to step forward safely in the pleasant way of duty and happiness ; so that to be truly happy, we must take God's holy word

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\* Jer. x. 23.

for our rule, and make it the daily companion of our lives.

*The holy scriptures teach such precepts, and offer such subjects to our meditation, as are calculated to inspire the mind with true felicity.*

IF we form our lives according to the holy scriptures, we may always be in a *happy* frame of mind, for it directs us to do nothing but what tends to our contentment and tranquility, nor to abstain from any thing but what would do us an essential harm if we practised or enjoyed it; so all the directions given us in God's word, are designed to smoothe the rugged paths of human life, and introduce *true felicity* among men; to counteract the design of our grand adversary who introduced sin into the world as the common disturber of the peace, which has occasioned so many miseries, both bodily and mental, and affected the whole mass of human nature, and sets men, not only to injuring one another, but also to doing mischief to themselves.

The principal import of God's word to man is, *do thyself no harm.\** If all men

\* Acts. xvi. 28.



would obey its directions, we should be restored (as far as our present mode of existence would admit) to our primitive innocence and happiness. But admitting that all mankind were in wars and commotion around us, if we obey the instructions given in God's word, we shall silence the tumult in our own breasts, the roaring of conscience will cease, and revelation aiding our own reason, will enable us to regulate our jarring and tumultuous passions, and bring them into their proper medium and harmony; so that while the world is filled with tumult, jars, and discord about us, we may possess a kingdom of peace, joy, and happiness within us; and this joy, says our Lord, *no man taketh from you*;\* and *my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you*:† a blessing that the world cannot give nor take away. But, on the other hand, if the nations were at peace around us, and all men at peace with us, and our own consciences were accusing, and God's law thundering against us, and every precept like a drawn sword pointed at our naked hearts, and in the mean time the passions of our minds all in a dreadful commotion, we should be like an Adam trembling

\* John xvi. 22.

† John xiv. 27.

under the shady boughs in the garden, when God came walking in the cool of the day and said unto him, *where art thou?*\* Not all the delights of paradise could cheer him, when God was thus angry with him; so that we may readily discover that *happiness* does not consist in outward circumstances or things, but in the joy of a good conscience, or an inward sense of our Maker's approbation.

The improvement of the mind adds much more to our happiness, than any sensual gratifications could possibly do; daily experience may convince us of this: we generally feel more pleasure in anticipating an earthly good, than we do in the possession or enjoyment of it. So delusive and cheating are all earthly comforts, that the instant we are expecting some solid satisfaction from them, all their charms and beauty, which were so alluring to our minds before, take wings and fly away.

But if we place our affections upon right objects, we shall not be subject to those perturbations of mind, arising from delusion and disappointment; for every thing that God has promised, is sure and certain, if we only comply with the conditions on our

\* Gen iii. 9.

parts ; these are objects that will never cloy in the enjoyment, and that we may occupy the whole of our rational powers in reflecting upon—objects that may engross all the affections of our minds ; and indeed it is hard to say how far the passions of wonder, love, joy, delight, &c. may not flow without excess upon such objects.

The holy scriptures open to our minds a wonderful field for meditation ; we are hereby brought to an acquaintance with the noblest objects, which can possibly be presented to the human mind ; it leads us to the knowledge and contemplation of God himself, and his incommunicable attributes and perfections ; it directs us to observe and admire the characters of his glory, in his wonderful works of creation, and in the methods of his most wise, benign, and righteous providence : to which may be added, it discloses to us a most glorious and ravishing scene in the redemption of mankind, by Jesus Christ, in which the wisdom and holiness, as well as grace and goodness, of God, are most illustriously displayed : there is nothing that affords us such rational satisfaction as to live in the practice of this duty.

Here in this sacred book, is an image, or a faint similitude of God, held out before

our imaginations, in more sublime ideas and stile, than a Homer, with all his celebrity, could have set forth ; but in our present imperfect state we are not able to form any adequate conceptions of his greatness, we can only judge of him from his works, of what we have seen or been informed of. The most grand and sublime figures are made use of to set forth his greatness, but as these figures are finite and brought down to our narrow capacities, they can give but a very faint idea of his real character ; he being infinite and eternal, there must be the greatest disparity between the figures and him they are designed to represent.

But it is very necessary sometimes to view the vast creation, the works of his hand, not for speculation, but to heighten our ideas of him, and elevate our affections to him ; for *the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work ; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge :\** and, says the Psalmist, *when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers ; the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man, that thou visitest him ?†* This view of his works

\* Psa. xix. 1, 2.    † Psa. viii. 3, 4.

serves to raise our adoration, and at the same time to sink us in the lowest abasement at his feet.

We are beholden to the inspired poet for a great many magnificent descriptions of the character of Jehovah; says he, "thou art very great, thou art clothed with honour and majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind, who maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire."\* "Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth; there went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it; he bowed the heavens also and came down, and darkness was under his feet, and he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind; he made darkness his secret place, his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies; at the brightness that was before him, his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire;

\* Psa. civ. 1, 2, 3, 4.

the Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the highest gave his voice,"\* &c. Or as it is beautifully expressed in these words,

" Till nature's King, who oft  
Amid tempestuous darkness, dwells alone,  
And on the wings of the careering wind,  
Walks, dreadfully serene, commands a calm ;  
Then straight air, sea, and earth, are hush'd at  
once."

Says the Psalmist again, *of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands, they shall perish but thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old as doth a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed : but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*† No figures could be held before our imagination, better calculated to inspire pompous or exalted ideas of the great Creator, than those we have quoted.

But if we survey the creation, from the smallest animalcule to the utmost bounds of the vast universe—if we behold every green leaf swarm with thousands of animals, that,

\* Psa. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

† Psa. cii. 25, 26, 27.

at their largest growth, are not visible to the naked eye—if we view the various productions of nature, with the metals, minerals, plants, and meteors, and then the whole earth at once, and the several planets that lie within its neighbourhood; and astonished to see so many worlds, hanging one above another, and sliding round their axles with such amazing pomp and solemnity, without the least crashing or discord—if after this, we contemplate those wide fields of ether, that reach in height from Saturn to the fixed stars, and run abroad almost to infinity; and then stretch our imagination farther among the fixed stars, which are supposed to be so many suns and worlds—our minds are confounded in such a labyrinth of thought, and lost in the immensity and magnificence of nature. *Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him; but the thunder of his power who can understand:\** when our imagination is stretched to its utmost extent, yet God is infinitely greater than our most refined researches are capable of comprehending; *high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?†*

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\* Job xxvi. 14.

† Job xi. 8.

taking care of the smallest insect, and at the same time extending his providence to surrounding worlds.

The imagination is something like the organ of sight ; it cannot bear to be confined within narrow limits, it desires a situation where it can command a distant prospect, and be viewing variety : so in our meditations we cannot feel that pleasure, with confining ourselves in a limited circle, as when we give our imagination more latitude ; for whatever is limited, and our minds can in a measure comprehend, carries along with it the idea of imperfection, which is unpleasant to the thought. But here is a Being, the object of our worship and adoration, that is not like the heathen gods and goddesses, confined in a limited space ; but behold, "heaven is his throne and the earth is his footstool. He removeth the mountains and they know not ; which overturneth them in his anger ; which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble ; which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars ; which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea ;\* and behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are

\* Job ix. 5, 6, 7, 8.



counted as the small dust of the balance; behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing;\* who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out the heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance."† But although he is so infinitely great, he stoops to take notice of the least atom, and the most feeble insect; the lilies of the field are clothed, and the ravens and sparrows are fed by him, he even numbers the hairs of our heads.

What felicity, then do such meditations add to our minds! and more especially when we consider ourselves the objects of his notice and paternal love, when we can claim him as our father, and have a full assurance that he looks down upon us with complacency, and that his wisdom, power, and goodness are all engaged to make us happy: does it give great pleasure to be in the good graces of a nobleman upon earth? how much greater happiness then must it afford to be in the favour of this exalted Being, that fills heaven and earth with his glory?

\* Isai. xl. 15.

† Isai. xl. 12.

The scriptures also present to our view another scene, in which we may feel ourselves more particularly interested, viz. the GOD-MAN, the suffering and dying Jesus, the *only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*;\* who although *he was rich, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich*;† being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person; upholding all things by the word of his power,‡ whose name is called wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the prince of peace:§ yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the (shameful) death of the cross.\*\* When our imagination can view him seated in the realms of light, between the cherubim and the seraphim, and all the hosts of heaven paying him their divine homage, set up in the bosom of the father from everlasting; and then, with a quick transition, behold him in the form of a servant, mocked and spit upon by men, condemned

\* John i. 14. † 2 Cor viii. 9. ‡ Heb. i. 3.

§ Isai. ix. 6.

\*\* Phil. ii. 7, 8.

like a criminal, and executed as a malefactor, what different emotions does it raise in the heart! the passion of anger is excited against the envious Jews, who with wicked hands crucified and put him to death; that of gratitude or love is raised by beholding the greatness of his pity and compassion, exercised towards a lost race of rebellious men, as exemplified in his sorrowful life and his ignominious and accursed death; and the passions of wonder and astonishment are also excited by viewing this amazing condescension, in leaving the regions of ineffable light; and laying aside his robes of transcendent brightness, covering himself with human nature, and appearing in the form of one that serveth. To see a God veiled in flesh, and, what is still more astonishing, to behold him submitting to the scorn, contempt, and revilings of impious men, whom he could have blasted with one breath of his nostrils—to see him meekly bearing the indignities that were put upon him, when it was in his power to have called a legion of angels to his assistance, if he had stood in need of them; yea, to see him *brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb be-*

*fore her shearers, opening not his mouth\*—*  
 when we behold his streaming blood, his  
 heaving breast, his dying pangs, and all  
 nature blushing and veiling itself in dark-  
 ness, and in the mean time hear his heavy  
 groans, which causes the earth to shake to  
 her centre, and his head falling upon his  
 sacred bosom, and he giving up the ghost—  
 when we see him praying and sweating in  
 Gethsemane, and view him expiring all in  
 a bloody gore upon the summit of Calvary ;  
 we are ready to exclaim, good God ! what  
 means all this ? the answer is ready at  
 hand, *God so loved the world that he gave*  
*his only begotten Son, that whosoever believ-*  
*eth in him should not perish, but have ever-*  
*lasting life.*†

“ Hell howl'd ; heav'n that hour let fall a tear ;  
 Heav'n wept, that man might smile ! heav'n bled,  
     that man  
 Might never die ! ”——

How can we help feeling our minds ele-  
 vated in the contemplation of such won-  
 derful love and goodness, manifested to a  
 lost and undone race : *greater love hath no*  
*man than this, that he lay down his life for*  
*his friends.*‡ But *when we were enemies,*  
*we were reconciled to God by the death of his*

\* Isai. liii. 7. † John iii. 16. ‡ John xv. 13.

*Son.\** He died for his enemies—for his murderers; yea, for all mankind who had estranged themselves from him by wicked works. Now, who but a God could have devised and executed such a scheme as this, for the redemption of lost and undone creatures? surely one minute's meditation upon this love of Christ, can yield more real satisfaction to the mind of a rational being, than all the amusing scenes that could be exhibited at the theatre in a whole night. O that men might *taste and see that the Lord is good*† and gracious.

In this sacred book we can see the loving Redeemer of the world, giving his last farewell discourse to his disciples; preparing their minds for the awful event that was to happen at Jerusalem, alleging that although they would shortly be deprived of his bodily presence among them, yet that another comforter should come and abide with them, which should more than compensate for his absence. *It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.*‡ According-

\* Rom. v. 10. † Psa. xxxiv. 8. ‡ John xvi. 7. 8.

ly, after his resurrection from the dead, he appeared to his disciples, where they were assembled together for fear of the Jews, and *breathed on them*, and said, *receive ye the Holy Ghost*,\* and also said, *tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high*.† Very soon after his ascension into glory, the promise of the Comforter was fulfilled: It was poured down upon the disciples in an abundant manner in the day of pentecost, so that the by-standers said, *these men are full of new wine*.‡ Well may the Holy Ghost be termed the Comforter, for the very design of his coming, is to comfort the souls of his people; but his operations upon the hearts of men, are something like the cloud that separated between the Israelites and Egyptians—To the righteous they are all light, life, and comfort; while to the wicked, they are darkness, terror, and misery; for whoever will not obey his divine dictates, cannot be happy. He convinces them of what is right, and reproves them of what is wrong; and as far as they resist his operations, they set up their own wills in opposition to the will of their Maker; and this never fails of making men unhappy,

\* John xx. 22. † Luke xxiv. 49. ‡ Acts ii. 13.

and how can it otherwise be, for when a servant disobey his master, he continually fears the rod of chastisement—there is always a guilt attending sin, which is in some measure its own punishment. But they who have the religion which the holy scripture recommends, feel their most genuine happiness and comfort, arising from the influence of the Spirit of God upon their hearts; *they have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father:\** and *the Spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God.* This Spirit not only witnesseth to them that God is their Father, but likewise helpeth their infirmities, and *maketh intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered*—this Spirit is an antidote against all evil: Should we be separated from our earthly friends and connexions to the most distant parts of the world, he is every where present comforting our hearts; and whatever affliction befalls us, he comforts us under it, and sanctifies it to our good; so that for *this cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*† In all these things the Spirit makes us more than conquerors.

\* Rom. viii. 15, 16. 26. † 2 Cor. iv. 16.

What wonderful subjects of meditation are these! that the infinite Jehovah, the three persons in the God-head, being possessed of such dignity, majesty, and glory, should condescend to take notice of such diminutive, vile creatures as we are; and after all our acts of rebellion against him, should spare and pity us—deign to own us as children, and give us the privilege of calling him father—promising that if we ask any thing in his name, he will give it us. The Father preserving, the Son redeeming, and the Spirit sanctifying and comforting us.

In the holy scriptures also, we have the final end of both the righteous and the wicked held out to view; we can discover enough of the *pit of Tophet*, the lake of fire and brimstone, or the dreary mansions of the damned, to awaken our gratitude, and to make us extol the merits of Jesus Christ; who has not only made it possible for us to escape it, but has so long preserved us from falling into its dark and dreary confines, during the days of our rebellion against him: but on the other hand, life and immortality are brought *to light through the gospel*;\* heaven with all its glories, is set before our

\* 2 Tim. i. 10.



eyes: sometimes when reading the word of God, in our meditations, we can see the clouds, and the ærial and starry heavens parting; then Sion's blooming mount heaves in view, with the unclouded face of the Redeemer, and all the hosts of the faithful, who have been redeemed from among men, of every kindred tongue and nation under heaven, falling down before the throne, and saying, *unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.\** There we can see seats prepared, and hear him saying in his word, *in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you, I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also.†* When a man is thus meditating, how can he help stopping to exclaim, O my soul! is all this glory prepared for thee, and art thou so reluctant in thy pursuit after it? gird up thy loins, and *be thou faithful unto death, and thou shalt have yonder crown of life.*

The New Jerusalem with all its magnificence, glory, and beauty, is represented before us; its jasper walls, its pearly gates,

\* Rev. i. 5, 6.

† John xiv. 2, 3.

its streets of gold, its crystal streams, and the tree of life ; but above all, the throne of God and the Lamb, where there is no *need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it*, for the *glory of God* is the light thereof :\* and we can hear “ the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them—ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing—the four beasts saying amen, and the four and twenty elders falling down and worshipping him that liveth for ever and ever.”† But the chief glory of heaven consists in a freedom from all the effects of sin in ourselves, and from the sight of it round about us ; and also where we shall have all our comforts flowing immediately from God himself, as from the fountain-head, without coming through the medium of corruptible things. In heaven we shall suffer no more pain, all tears shall be wiped for ever from our eyes, and *sorrow and sighing shall flee away* ;‡ there is no more

\* Rev. xxi. 23. † Rev. v. 11, 12. 14.

‡ Isai. xxxv. 10.

sympathizing with the indigencies or miseries of our friends, and no more loss of near and dear relatives ; but here God will be all in all. Sometimes when the religious man is contemplating thus, on these divine glories, he is so caught away in the visions of God, that he is ready to imagine himself already seated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But lo ! suddenly he starts from his pleasing reverie, and finds that he has not yet passed the Jordan of death, into the glorious land of promise ; yet he feels so delighted with these contemplations, that if he were destitute of every thing of this world, that could make him comfortable, the foreboding of that glory which shall be revealed hereafter, would make him vastly happier than the greatest king (destitute of it) that ever swayed an earthly sceptre : he can hear God saying, in language similar to this, All this glory shall be thine, if thou wilt take up thy cross, and follow me.

In our perusals of the sacred oracles, we shall find a sublime description of the resurrection of the body, and the last judgment, offered to our meditation. That same Being who first bade all nature spring from nothing, and order to rise out of chaos ; who

bade the sun to mount the spacious heavens, and the moon and stars to shine in the night watches; who stretched the north over the empty space, and hanged the earth upon nothing, will e'er long come, the Judge both of the quick and dead, and at his awful approach will set the heavens and the earth on fire, and all nature will be consumed in the general blaze. In the mean time, by the loud trumpet's blast; *many that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt:*\* the dead who are in their graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.† How wonderful the thought (if we might allow ourselves to take such a flight of the fancy) that these bodies,‡ which have variously wasted away into myriads of atoms, and perhaps scattered over a whole continent, should again be shaped into their original form, however wide the limbs may have been severed apart! those bodies, that have been drowned, and devoured by the fishes of the sea; those which have been

\* Dan. xii. 2.      † John v. 28. 29.

‡ Or their constituent parts.

burned to ashes, and their dust strewed into the four winds of heaven; those that have been torn to pieces by the wild beasts of the earth, and whose flesh has served to fatten the vermon of the desert, and suffered a kind of transformation from human to the flesh of brutes; and those various bodies, which have been lying as manure upon the face of the earth, and fertilized the soil, and the substance thereof grown up into herbs and plants—all those particles of the human body, however they may have been disposed of, in the order of providence, and changed in their form or mode of existence, and however minute and unobserved by man, yet the eyes of that great Being who takes notice of the smallest *animalcule*, which we cannot discover only by the assistance of a microscope, beholds every particle, and as the poet expresses it,

“Looks down, and watches all my dust,  
Till he shall bid it rise.”

What a beautiful figure is here represented to the mind! God, sitting in the heavens, and looking down with attention upon the little vagrant mites that are scattered abroad upon the globe, floating upon the water, or flying in the air, and watching them until

the day when he will collect them all together, so that not one of them shall be lost!

“ See the scattered limbs, and all  
The various bodies, obsequious to the call,  
Self-mov'd advance, perhaps the neck to meet  
The distant head, the distant legs the feet ;  
Dreadful to view ! see through the dusky sky,  
Fragments of bodies in confusion fly  
To distant regions, journeying there to claim  
Deserted members, and complete the frame !”

Now if we suffer our imagination to roam upon the subject for a few minutes, my God ! what a scene is exhibited ! what do we see ! a Judge, seated upon a great white throne ; his eyes, like blazing meteors, spreading devastation and terror all around ; the bowels of the sun pouring out, and the constellations of heaven catching fire ; the moon assuming a bloody aspect, and the earth cleaving to its very centre ; the sea roaring and men's hearts failing them for fear ! But what bellowing sound is that we hear, waxing louder and louder, thrilling through heaven's vast expanse ? It is the trump of God, founding, Ye dead arise, and come to judgment ! Behold, O my soul, the earth swarming, and the sea teeming with myriads, who have lain dormant for hun-

dreds and thousands of years, within their confines; some rising with their spiritual bodies, like unto Christ's glorious body, to meet him in the air, exulting as they fly, and singing the new song, that none can sing save they *which are redeemed from the earth*.\* But what haggard forms are those we behold yonder? their bodies are variously distorted; despair and terror are depicted in their faces; they are eager to escape the hand of justice, and wish to fly again to the bosom of the earth, from which they sprang, and to lie eternally hid under its deepest gloom; but justice drags them to the flaming bar, however reluctant they may be; they now are standing with their downcast eyes, and trembling limbs, to receive a reward from the hand of their Judge—these are they who would not have the Son of God to reign over them; he now says, *Bring them hither, and slay them before me*;† the vast catalogue of their sins are read over in the hearing of the whole congregations of both heaven and hell, and all their secret crimes are exposed to view; and no sooner is the judgment closed, than they are hurried into the precincts of hell,

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\* Rev. xiv. 3.

† Luke xix. 27.

branded by the hand of Justice in their foreheads, and the black seal of reprobation eternally fixed upon them; for *whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.\**

“Nor man alone; the foe of God and man,  
From his dark den, blaspheming, drags his chain,  
And rears his brazen front, with thunder scarr’d;  
Receives his sentence, and begins his hell.”

But, when we turn our eyes in another direction, how different an aspect do we behold! What radiant forms are those we discover? *these are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;† these have followed the Lamb whithersoever he went;‡ the righteous Judge is crowning and owning them before his father, and his holy angels; the gates of paradise are opened—the ambrosial fields of bliss appear in sight—the marriage supper is made ready, and they are invited to partake of it; Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.|| Then shall the*

\* Rev. xx. 15.      † Rev. vii. 14.

‡ Rev. xiv. 4.      § Matt. xxv. 34.



*righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.\**

All those subjects of meditation have a natural tendency to raise joyful emotions in the heart, and to increase the happiness of a religious man; but it may seem a paradox to some, that a blazing heaven—an earth in convulsions—an opening hell—and a damned throng, trembling at the left hand of a sin-avenging God, should heighten or raise the happiness of any creature. It is not the view of these alone, but they are only brought in as concomitant circumstances, along with those elevating scenes which have been exhibited. In the finest pieces of pencil work, which are most ravishing to the sight, instance in a landscape, we not only have the brighter colours, the azure sky, the shining stream, and the verdant trees, fields, and meadows, with the various beauties of nature; but, that it may be complete, there is now and then a lowering cloud interspersed through the sky; sometimes a blasted oak, with its leafless boughs extended in the air, and here and there a barren hill, covered over with craggy rocks, and sometimes huge precipices, with deep dells and cavities in the earth, and both

\* Matt. xiii. 43.

lights and shades are made use of according to whatever is portrayed to the eye, which presents a romantic prospect and gives pleasure to the beholder : so when we read those dreadful truths, and of the thundering justice of God, upon the wicked, intermixed with the more pleasing doctrines of the gospel, it has a like effect upon the mind of a Christian ; for, although these truths are shocking to a sinner, they have nothing in them to terrify the mind of a holy man ; for the flames of hell can never touch him, but he can exult in hope of his full reward in the day of reckoning, when this body, which he has mortified by fasting, and wearied and fatigued by excessive labour and duty, and that has endured buffetings and abuse, for Christ's sake, will be reunited to the soul, and share with it in the glory of God for ever ; then all revilings and scorn, contempt, mockings, and persecutions will come to an end, and then we shall enter (if we are found worthy) into that rest, which *remaineth for the people of God.\** In this world they have called us enthusiasts, fools, mad men, and the like, but in that day we shall discover who will be deemed so, by the Judge of all the earth ; we read the

foolish will come knocking when it is too late, saying *Lord, Lord, open unto us* ; but he will answer and say, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not,\** while the wise will be admitted into life eternal.

*A more plain Description, both of the Nature and Fruits of Religion.*

WE shall now come to a more plain description of that pure and undefiled religion, recommended in this treatise. What we have been saying concerning the regulation of our passions, bringing them under the control of reason, and submitting our reason to the superior force of revelation, with those various subjects for meditation which the scriptures hold out to our view, must be acknowledged to be great helps to a religious life, and very well calculated to tranquillise the mind, and inspire it with the most rational satisfaction ; but now we come to a more deep and thorough work of the spirit upon the human heart, through the medium of that faith which is of the operation of God, that we have already described, which gives more permanent happiness to the

\* Matt. xxv. 11. 12.

foul of man, than all our own efforts, however rational, can possibly do.

This religion is opposed to sin of every kind, and as such, effects a thorough change both in our hearts and lives, so that those who are Christians, are quite another sort of people from the ungodly, they are quite different in their disposition and manners, the one puts the reins in the hands of passion, goes where inclination leads him, and is under the power and dominion of sinful propensities; the other bends all his endeavours to the glorifying of God, doing good to men, and getting more grace in his own heart; they differ in degrees almost as wide as heaven and hell, which places we must not believe to be wholly hereafter, for both the one and the other are in some measure begun upon earth, but the vulgar error is that these are altogether confined to another world, they have dreadful apprehensions of fire and brimstone, while at the same time they feed in their hearts a living fire, that is the hell of lusts, which do miserably scorch their souls, and yet they are not concerned at all about it, they do not perceive that hell steals upon them every moment, while they are here upon earth, and as for heaven, they are gazing abroad for it, as though it was some great and high pre-

ferment that must come from without, and never look for the beginnings of it to arise in their own hearts : whereas nothing without, strictly speaking, can make us either happy or miserable ; so neither can any thing defile or hurt us, but what comes from within, *for from within, out of the heart of man proceedeth evil thoughts, &c.* and these *defile the man.*\* But they who are made like unto God in the frame and temper of their minds, and live according to the everlasting and unchangeable rules of goodness, righteousness and truth, may in some sense, be said to have entered into heaven already, for (says the apostle) he hath *made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*† But they who live in sin and care not to approve themselves unto God, by leading holy and religious lives, do measurably partake of the nature of devils, and are already entered into the state of hell, for *he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him ;*‡ and we are told *the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked,*|| consequently where the wrath and curse of God is, there is hell in its beginning ; then who in the exercise

\* Mark vii. 21. 23.      † Ephe. ii. 6.

‡ John iii. 36.      || Prov. iii. 33.

of his senses, would lay any claim to happiness in such a state as this : but although religion advances the soul to such solid enjoyments, yet it appears very contemptible in the eyes of a deluded world : It grows up like a root out of a dry ground, and has no comeliness in it, in their opinion, that they should desire it ; but we may say of religion as of its divine Master, *thou art fairer than the sons of men, thou art altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand.*

We now proceed to a larger description both of its nature and fruits. To form a proper judgment of right and wrong, true and false, good and evil, to learn and practise the one and cease from the other, may be called the *grammar* of religion, or are so many leading steps to the attainment of it : so that when a man comes in possession of the *pearl of great price*, viz. conversion, justification, or regeneration, being built upon these first principles, it grows higher by degrees, as he improves the grace and talents committed to his trust ; its nature is such, that it refines our tempers and regulates our actions, or if this is not the case, we shall make religion to be an empty sound, a mere vapour ; but it is a blessed reality, it surmounts the greatest difficulties, cuts it,

way through hosts of enemies, and overcomes all opposition: instance the martyrs, who could go exulting to the burning faggot, and the apostles, who could return after they had been beaten, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*\* The spring that gives it motion is the spirit of God, *assisting our infirmities*; superadded to the reason of man, and this holy spirit aiding our reason gives it that fortitude and firmness, that enables us to press forward toward *the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*,† without which we should be weaker than a bruised reed.

Religion makes us live up to our highest faculties, and teaches us to practise such virtues as become rational beings who bear the image of the immortal God, and are exalted above the inferior creation; it prompts us to scorn all actions that are base disingenuous or unworthy of our state and the relation in which we stand to our Creator; it forbids us to do any thing that would make us like the beasts, or that would sink us into a lower order, by indulging ourselves in sensuality or carnal-mindedness; it

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\* Acts v. 41.

† Phil. iii. 14.

also forbids that which would transform us into the likeness of devils, viz. pride, presumption, self-conceit, and the like.

Religion makes us like Christ in wisdom and righteousness, goodness, charity, and compassion; in forgiving injuries, pardoning enemies, and in doing hurt to none, but good to all, as we have power and opportunity: they who are of this disposition, will scarcely ever want for a friend in time of need. It may be noticed here, that our opposition to an enemy, makes him more furious against us; therefore, to pardon him, is the way to regain his friendship; and to have friendship with all around us, is one great source of happiness: but our resenting an injury makes it doubly grievous, for the greater part of the misery that a man feels, under such circumstances, is by fomenting the injury in his own mind; whereas, if he was to pardon and pass it by, it would be like a morning cloud, or an early dew. If we would be happy, let us do harm to none; for this will free us from a thousand fears, which others are possessed of: there is such a spirit of retaliation in the world, that if we injure a man, he will try, generally speaking, to injure us again; but if we should suffer injuries from others, and we are conscious to ourselves, that we have



never injured them, we can feel our own minds at peace. But the greatest infelicity attending injuries, is either guilt in ourselves, as in some measure meriting of them, or suffering them to have an undue influence upon our hearts: in scripture we are commanded to *do good to all men*, and to *speak evil of none*; to love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us: and *if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head*;\* we are also exhorted by the same apostle, not to be *overcome of evil*, but to *overcome evil with good*.†

Then a religious man ought not to be like the gods of Epicurus, entirely regardless of the good of men, lying lolling upon the clouds, and rather darting down thunder and lightning upon them, than relieving them in their distresses; but he ought to be like the guardian angels of Plato, always doing good to those they were concerned with; or, rather like our great pattern the Lord Jesus Christ, who filled up his whole life in acts of benevolence to others, and at last died for his murderers. If we were to walk according to these rules, how many perturbations of mind, as well as dif-

\* Rom. xii. 20.

† Rom. xii. 21.

ficulties from others, should we escape, which would serve very much to smoothe the rugged paths of human life ; and if all men were in possession of this religion, wars and contentions would cease, and harmony and unanimity would soon overspread the whole earth.

Religion prompts us to follow the guidance of true and dispassionate reason, although some are of the opinion, that it opposes reason ; not so, but it is reason itself, it tames the extravagancies of the passions, and regulates the exorbitances of the will, it permits us the pleasure of our bodies so far as it will introduce no guilt or disturbance into the mind ; hence, if the will or passions prompt us to do, or leave any thing undone, we should suspect the treachery of our own hearts, as knowing that *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* ;\* and, unless it should be in a case that is very plain at first view, we ought to call in our own reason and the word of God, to hold an arbitration upon it before we act, and by so doing we should save ourselves many a sore wound, and stripe of conscience, and from committing and betraying ourselves into many inconsistencies, which

\* Jer. xvii. 9.

would not only hurt our christian characters, but would also essentially injure our reputation among men in the world.

Religion begets in us a sweet and gracious temper of soul, calm in itself, and loving to mankind ; but anger, hatred, or revenge, prejudice, or evil surmising, are, generally speaking, the offspring of the devil, and they who possess them carry a fire in their own bosoms ; whereas religion is love, and, says John, *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him ;\** but *whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer ; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.†* It was this malevolent spirit which led Cain to kill his brother, but after he had done the wicked deed, the *voice of his brother's blood cried unto heaven from the ground,‡* and the Lord troubled his conscience continually, he was afraid that every one who saw him would slay him. There is something of the same guilt and misery attending every one's conscience, who indulges the same morose tempers of mind ; but the religious man can feel his soul unruffled, his heart calm, and all the tempers of his mind undisturbed a-

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\* 1 John iv. 16. † 1 John iii. 15. ‡ Gen iv. 10.

mid life's tempestuous sea ; while the contrary characters are beating continually upon the dreadful waves of perturbation, mortification, and keen distress ; for *there is no peace to the wicked, they are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.\**

Religion also begets in us a freedom of spirit, and banishes groundless fears, foolish imaginations, and all dastardly thoughts ; but some persons are *all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear*, they are continually perplexing themselves about some evils before them. If a man had the whole world at will, and was possessed of these fears, we might venture to defy him to enjoy any real happiness ; but this religion teaches us to form right conceptions of God, that he transacts all things with mankind as a loving father with his children, and that *his eyes are over the righteous for good, and his ears are open unto their prayers,†* and that he delights not in the misery of his creatures. As religion is love, we are told *perfect love casteth out fear,‡* it creates in us the most rational satisfaction, and affords us the joy of a good conscience, so that it

\* Isai. lvii. 20, 21.    † 1 Pet. iii. 12.

‡ 1 John iv. 18.

may be said the peace of a good man flows like a river, and *his righteousness as the waves of the sea.\** When he lies down or rises up, he has a constant sense of God's paternal care over him, and love towards him; he can more confidently trust in the goodness of God, than he could in the goodness of the nearest and best friend he has upon earth—*He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;†* can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee,‡ faith the Lord. David could say, *when my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up;||* yea, says God, *fear not thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel, I will help thee;\*\** yea, I will uphold thee, *by the right hand of my righteousness; when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee;††* then we can say, *behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jeho-*

\* Ifai. xlvi. 18.      † Prov. xviii. 24.

‡ Isa. xlix. 15.      || Psa. xxvii. 10.

\*\* Ifai. xli. 14.      †† Ifai. xliii. 2.

*vah is my strength, and my song, he also is become my salvation.\**

Religion advances the soul in its just sovereignty over the inferior appetites ; most of the miseries among men spring from letting the beastly nature rule instead of the rational ; but religion teaches us to check and mortify those unruly propensities, and to keep them within their due limits ; it also strengthens our reason against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which is effected chiefly by mortifying the appetites, and refraining from intemperance ; for it is that which generally frustrates the work of religion, either by stupifying or enraging the spirits or by putting them into irregular motions.

It is clear then that religion is something more than a mere acquaintance with systems of divinity, or our reading a great many books ; for notions of religion can no more make us good Christians, than barely possessing books of arts and sciences can make us learned. If we have true religion, we have *Christ* formed in our hearts, *the hope of glory* ; then as he is the *Sun of righteousness* and the *light of the world*, this light will shine forth through all our actions and

\* Isai. xii. 2.

deportment to those around us ; for Christ did not come here upon earth merely to establish opinions in the world, but to change the hearts and reform the manners of men—he came to expiate and atone for our sins, but the end of all this was that we might forsake *ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.\**

This religion is both an inward and outward work : the inward is a strong faith that overcomes the world, and a supreme love to God that casts out fear—a peace that passeth all understanding, and a joy in the Holy Ghost. They who have this work wrought in them, have the answer of a good conscience ; for there is *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit ;†* they are cleansed from the defilement of sin, and it is their privilege to *rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, concerning them.‡* The outward work is to flee not only from open gross sins, but from every appearance of evil—to submit ourselves to all known duties, and

\* Titus ii. 12.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, 18.

*to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.\** Seeing that our religion is experimental as well as practical, we may take notice, that there is no religion in the world either Jewish, Turkish, or Pagan, so carelessly observed by its profelytes; and one cause that may be assigned for it is, their institutions are for the most part outward ceremony or bodily exercises, whereas universal goodness and virtue are the indispensable injunctions of christianity—But there is another and more weighty cause of this delinquency; our religion is so pure in its nature, that the carnal heart has no relish for it. We may easily perceive the force of this, if we attend to a few particulars: the truth of christianity is a great deal better attested; it stands upon the foundation of more incontestable evidence; it promises us greater things, both in this world and the next, if we obey its precepts; and on the other hand, pronounces the most dreadful curses and judgments against us, if we disobey; then what else but the fallen nature in man, could induce them to be so much more careless about it, than the Turks and Pagans are in the observance of theirs.

\* Heb. xii. 14.



To abstain from every appearance of evil, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world, goes against the grain, lays the axe at the root of the carnal mind, and hews Agag in pieces: whereas those other opinions of religion being merely human, require no such sacrifices, but allow men to indulge themselves in evil habits, and live according to the lusts of their own hearts. I have somewhere read a remark of Diogenes Laertius, who gives this reason why the Epicureans kept closer to their rules than the Stoics, because the first enjoined only what men had a mind to be, but the latter what they ought to be.

A person possessing this religion cannot fail of being measurably happy: for true felicity does not consist in outward things, as has already been mentioned, but in an inward sense of God's divine approbation; so that their happiness does not depend upon the applause of men, health of body, or prosperity in business; it is that which the world cannot give nor take away: then as it is not founded upon the fluctuating opinions of men, nor upon the fleeting things of sense, it has the eternal Rock of Ages for its basis, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it; so that it is calculated to

inspire the most permanent contentment of mind.

*A short View of the Character of a religious Man.*

LET us now take a short view of the righteous man's character, that we may form a truer estimate of his felicity : he is a servant of God, doing the most honourable work, and acting from the purest principles, possessed of the greatest peace of mind, and has the fairest prospect of a most glorious end—*now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life ;\* being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.†* God is his father ; Christ is his friend, and the Holy Spirit is his comforter. He has godliness with contentment, which is great gain, *having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.‡* Whatever enemies he may have, he overcomes them with good ; and whatever injury they may design to do him, his soul is above feeling harrowed up with prejudice, anger, or revenge against them, or

\* Rom. vi. 22. † Rom. v. 1. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

letting his mind be tortured with any thing of the kind, that is base or disingenuous; he enjoys sweet communion with God, in secret places, and has the most delightful views of the glories of his divine Master.

Religion raises him to the most sublime hopes, and it opens to him the most ravishing and blisful prospects, which tends to spread a sacred joy and satisfaction through all his powers; his views are not confined within the narrow limits of this present state, but extend even to eternity; he can upon solid grounds *stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*;\* in proportion as this hope prevails, he has heaven brought down to him in some happy beginnings here on earth; like Moses, on the top of Pisgah, he can view the goodly land, or he is lost in a pleasing reverie, like the three disciples when they beheld their Lord transfigured upon the mount, and said *it is good for us to be here*;† his soul is often made like the chariots of Amminidab, he is so taken up in heavenly contemplations, that for a few minutes at a time, he forgets whether he is in heaven or upon earth; by faith he outrides all the storms of a tumultuous life, and keeps

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\* Rom. v. 2.

† Matt. xvii. 4.

the world continually under his feet ; he does not envy the lot of the rich, and of the great, but often looks down upon them with pity.

He lives in peace with all around him, provides things honest *in the sight of all men*, and his greatest pleasure is in doing good to the souls and bodies of his fellow creatures ; he is never better pleased than when he sees all happy in his neighbourhood ; he is so far from trying to set his neighbours at variance, that he is quite the opposite character—one, that our Lord addresses, in his sermon on the mount, *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God* ;\* he is the *salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city set on an hill, which cannot be hid*.†

Now we may consider such a man as this not only happy because of the amiable principles he possesses, or the peace he has with his neighbours around him, but more particularly because God himself has pronounced him so ; *happy art thou, O Israel ; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord* ;‡ *happy is the people whose God is the Lord* ;|| and *happy is he that hath the God of Jacob*

\* Matt. v. 9.      † Matt. v. 13, 14.

‡ Deut xxxiii. 29.      || Psal. cxliv. 15.

*for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.\** This man has the Son of God walking with him through the fiery furnace, and protecting him in the midst of the ravening beasts of prey; and when he is called to resign his mortal life, his hope is full of immortality, he can carry his views beyond the grave, and say, with David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake: yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."† When the last mortal pang is past, and his soul is dislodged from this cumberous clay, he is borne away, like Lazarus, by angels, into Abraham's bosom, where all *tears will be wiped from his eyes, and God will give all the righteous to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father for ever and ever.*

*Some Objections stated, and answered, against the Happiness of a religious Life.*

There are certain objections made against the happiness of a religious life, which it is

\* Psal. cxlvi. 5.    † Psal. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

necessary for us to answer. Say they, the practice of religion and virtue, however pleasant in idea, is, in fact, disagreeable to the greatest part of mankind—that the duties thereof require such self-denial and mortification of the appetites and passions, that they are inconsistent with happiness—that repentance, which is the first necessary step to a religious life, is attended with bitter pangs and sorrows—and that this christian course is not only difficult in our first entrance, but is all the way troublesome and uneasy; it requires a constant watchfulness and a strict discipline to be exercised over our own hearts, and the like: and there are some whom it would be the height of uncharitableness not to think sincerely religious, who spend their days in sadness and mar all the pleasures of human life.

Such are the objections in the minds of men against religion; but it is no hard matter to shew, that notwithstanding all this, its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths peace.\* The difficulties and troubles objected against, do not arise from religion itself, or any thing in its own nature that is disagreeable, but wholly from the indisposition and corruption of the human heart; it

\* Prov. iii. 17.

is no just objection against religion and virtue that those who are under the power of vicious habits and irregular appetites, find no pleasure in it. In this case the fault is not to be charged upon religion, but upon the perverseness of their own taste; a blind man cannot be delighted with colours, or a deaf man with melody: food may be ever so pleasant to the taste, though a vitiated palate can not relish it: religion is none the less excellent, because it gives no delight to an impure and unholy soul. But that we may receive satisfaction in it, let us labour earnestly to get our hearts purified, and a happy change wrought in the temper of our minds, let us apply ourselves to God in humble and fervent prayer, that he may be pleased graciously to create a clean heart within us, and to renew a right spirit, and enable us to discern the things that are truly excellent.

Let it be further observed that even those duties which seem most difficult, and that we have the greatest aversion to, are, if rightly understood, not only highly rational, but lay a foundation for the truest satisfaction of mind; such as the mortification of our corrupt appetites and passions. It must indeed be acknowledged to be a dif-

ficult work, but we often represent it to ourselves to be greater than what it really is, for if we set about the work in good earnest, the Spirit of God will assist our infirmities, and make *darkness light before us, and crooked things straight, and hard things easy.*

Whatever pains it may cost us to correct our evil habits, it may be truly said, the man who mortifies his vicious lusts, has more rational self-enjoyment, than he who indulges them; for he only controls the flesh, his more base and brutish part, in order to exalt his soul, the nobler part of his nature: but the opposite character debases that noble soul which was made to possess the image of God, into a servile subjection to beastly appetites; the soul has an original claim to superiority, its right is to arbitrate and set as the preceptor, and it is the business of the inferior appetites to obey: then it is easy to see that while the immortal spirit is kept in subjection to the lust of the flesh, human nature is all disorganized, and the rational part can never be happy in such a state, no more than a king or governor could be happy when he is kept in chains and slavery by his subjects: then in the mortification of those appetites, the happiness of the soul consists in a good degree;



not only because it obtains its just sovereignty over the body, but because it has the approbation of its Maker in so doing, and acts up to that for which it was created.

It may be added further, the chief difficulties in breaking off from our corrupt habits, and applying ourselves in good earnest to the practice of piety, is at the first setting out; but proportionably as we advance in it, the easier and pleasanter it will grow. It is true, they *that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution*;\* but that is no argument against the happiness of a religious life, for there is nothing more common than this, that when a man differs from the majority, a great many ill-natured things will be said against him: when a man obtains any high title of honour, or gets into any great office of state, the proud will envy him, and he will be the butt of their censures and raillery; so when we get higher in the favour of God than other men, they will persecute and deride us, although they may be sensible in the mean time, that we enjoy more happiness than they do; but it is the very disposition of the children of the bond women, to persecute the children of the free: never-

\* 2 Tim. iii. 12.

theless there is one thing to comfort us, these persecutions do not cleave to our outside garments, they are only the corrupt breath of men of perverse minds; and in the midst of our greatest difficulties and persecution, we frequently enjoy the greatest comfort, for when did the disciples rejoice more, than when they were returning from the magistrates, after being beaten with many stripes; and when did Paul and Silas sing more joyfully than when their hands and feet were made fast in the stocks in a dark dungeon; so this makes the observation good, the world cannot give this happiness, neither can it take it away: *If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; \* blessed or happy are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. †*

As to any objections drawn from the sad and uncomfortable lives of many who seem to be religious, this is not owing to religion itself, but generally to faults or mistakes in those that profess it, owing either to their want of suitable confidence in God, or to their indulging themselves in some bosom sin that they have not wholly sacrificed, or leaning in their affections too much to the

\* 1 Pet. iii. 14.

† Matt. v. 10.

world, or else omitting some known duty ; any of these as well as a variety of other things that might be named, have a natural tendency to make the soul unhappy ; for says the apostle, *if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.\** A half-hearted Christian, it must be allowed, has but very little satisfaction ; he cannot indulge himself in fleshly gratification, nor yet enjoy the happiness arising from a sense of God's favour, but he is continually tossed upon the troubled waves of hope and fear in quick succession, which keep his soul on a rack of misery. Let us not be of the lukewarm or fearful unbelieving kind, but like Caleb, let us "wholly follow the Lord, adding to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness, charity ;"† that we may "be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with the fulness of God."‡ When we ar-

\* Cor. xv. 19.      † 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

‡ Eph. iii. 18. 19.

rive to this experience, we shall be able to form a proper estimate of the happiness of a religious life.

*Some considerations offered, and rules to be observed, in order to a Holy and Happy Life.*

THE following considerations and rules, I recommend to all well disposed people, forasmuch as they regard their present and future happiness, that they may peruse them carefully, and attend to them strictly, that they may be a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path, and guide their unwary steps safely on through the various scenes of human life: Then before we enter upon those rules, there are two things necessary for us to call our attention to.

*First,* To consider seriously upon the immortality of our souls, and to labour for a suitable knowledge of ourselves. If we were altogether like beasts, destitute of rational souls, then we might go on and gratify all our sensual appetites, without restraint; but let us consider our souls are immortal, and that when the foundations of nature shall give way, the pillars of heaven be dissolved, and the sun and moon no longer endure, our souls shall flourish in immortal youth—shall exist, either in bliss or

torment, through the endless ages of eternity. Can we think seriously upon this, and submit those dignified principles, the willing vassals of fleshly lusts? only let us imagine thus with ourselves, that we are now in eternity—that myriads of ages are already elapsed, and that our bliss or our torment is only as it were beginning: well, that will actually be the case, for life is only the introduction of our existence: should we not then take some pains to procure the happiness of those immortal parts, or would we act so much like a silly child, who has a jewel of vast worth, and casts it into deep waters where it cannot be found again, as though it was of no more value than a common stone: shall we then cast our souls away (which are worth more to us than a thousand worlds) into the *bottomless pit*, by our sinfulness or negligence? let us consider in time what we are about, for if we lose our souls, they are gone for ever. Then if we really believe in their immortality, can we as rational creatures, labour night and day, and spend all our time in laying up something for the body, which is of such a short duration, and wholly neglect our better part, that must exist for ever—surely the most valuable part ought to be an object of our greatest concern.

But that we may take care of our better part, it is necessary that we should come to a proper knowledge of ourselves, in order that we may act with a suitable decorum at all times, and upon all occasions. But there is one thing here particularly to be noticed, and that is, in the investigation of self; it is a very easy matter to find out all our excellencies, graces, or good properties, and even to swell and exaggerate them; but the main point is for us to know our weaknesses and blemishes, this is of importance both in a christian and civil life.

For, 1st, If we do not know our sinfulness, and that by nature, we are altogether unfit for the kingdom of heaven, and that *there is no soundness in us,\** we never shall come to God for pardon, for *they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick,†* so that if we do not feel our sickness, we shall not apply to a physician for a cure, and if we know nothing of our weakness, we shall never guard suitably against temptation: the apostle says, *let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,‡* &c. Every man has a weak side, and it is a great matter to know and guard against it, for our enemy

\* Isai. i. 6.    † Matt. ix. 12.    ‡ Heb. xii. 1.

will attack us, sooner on that quarter than any other.

2d. This knowledge of ourselves is also necessary in order to support our dignity in the sight of men, for if we know nothing of our foibles, we shall be apt to show them in every company where we go, and expose ourselves to the remarks and ridicule of all about us, for if we are blind to our own foibles, others are not; they take more notice of them than of our most shining accomplishments: but if we are acquainted with those weaknesses ourselves, we can keep them so much out of the view of others, as to pass for tolerably wise persons, although we ourselves are sensible in the mean time, how far we are deficient. If any man supposes that he has no such weaknesses, this is a sure mark that he has great ones, and but little knowledge of himself; for the more knowledge a man has, the more he discovers his deficiency: but as it was said before, with a very small share of knowledge a man may know his excellencies, because this is perfectly consistent with fallen nature, and is what swells the heart with vanity.

But one great benefit of self-knowledge is, it will keep us from being puffed up with

applause on the one hand, and from sinking by reproach on the other; for if others should discover any of our foibles, and reproach us for them, we feel in ourselves that we in some measure deserve it, and instead of breaking out into bitter rage and revenge, it has no other effect upon us, but shame and amendment; and if they should reproach us for well doing, we can only pity their ignorance, and exercise compassion: there is no way to make them more effectually ashamed of their conduct, than to take no notice of their reproaches, and to pass them by with indifference; they will then discover that we have minds that are too great to be moved by a corrupt breath of words: but if they should applaud us for our wisdom or good actions, we are so well convinced of the weaknesses in ourselves, which lie concealed from their view, that this proves a sufficient barrier against pride and ostentation: thus our souls are stable and not affected by the breath of men. Who can imagine the singular advantage we gain by such a knowledge both in the tranquility of our minds, and from the propriety of our deportment and conduct among our fellow men which it produces; for by it we avoid many snares which otherwise would



injure us essentially, both in our persons and reputation.

*Secondly.* It will be well for us to consider, that we are accountable beings to God, as our Sovereign and Judge; as our Master, who bought us with a price; and as our Father, who begat us: therefore we are not left to our own disposals, to act as we please; *for the Lord is our Judge, and the Lord is our lawgiver* :\* he has given us rules to square our lives by, and notes down all our actions in the book of his remembrance, *with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil* : † then whatever thought, word, or action, we would not wish brought forward, in the decisive day of reckoning, let us not indulge ourselves in here. God's law requires not only an outward conformity to the rules of morality, but also *truth in the inward parts*, that we should be restored both to his favour by justification and adoption, and to his image by purity or sanctification; that we should possess perfect love to him and perfect humility before him; there is nothing short of a whole sacrifice that he will accept of: the command is, *be ye holy, for I am holy* ; ‡ *be ye therefore perfect, even as*

\* Isa. xxxiii. 22. † Eccl. xii. 14. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 16.

*your Father which is in heaven is perfect.\**

This is nothing less than to have the whole image of Satan erased from our hearts, and the sting of death extracted, which is sin; and to be filled with all the communicable fulness that is in Christ, or which is called in other words, a having the *mind which was in Christ*: we can then say, *now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life;*† for holy actions are the consequent fruits of such a change; holiness and happiness are inseparable companions; and he that does not attain to the one, can never enjoy the other, in a very great degree; for proportionably as we increase in holiness, we partake of the nature of God, get nearer to him, and realize more of his glory. And it is this holiness that gives us a title to the kingdom of heaven; for no unclean or unholy thing shall enter there: as God is the fountain of all true happiness, and holiness is the way to get nearer to him, therefore, they who are most holy are possessed of the greatest happiness, because they are the nearest to him who is the source of happiness: and as holiness gives us a title to, and a well grounded hope

\* Matt. v. 48.

† Rom. vi. 22.

of the crown of life hereafter, and as a great deal of our happiness depends upon anticipation, as well as actual enjoyment, therefore holiness is necessary to give us this happiness of anticipation, or the felicity of believing *that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;\** or of saying, *henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.†* The following rules may be considered as so many fruits of a holy life:—

*Rule 1st.* Let us be careful not to set too high a value upon earthly things, *which are to perish in the using;‡* but undoubtedly every creature of God is good if it be received with thanksgiving,|| and they were designed for our comfort and happiness; and so far as we use them for the glory of God, so far we enjoy the true end of them; but if we set too much of our affections upon them, he whose name is *jealous*, will look down upon us with displeasure and disapprobation: and they who covet to be rich

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\* 2 Cor. v. 1.

† 2 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Col. ii. 22.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 4.

(in the things of this world) *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.\** There is a certain delusion in riches, it is represented to the mind that if we possessed such a large estate, we should be free from wants; but *he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance, with increase;†* for as a man enlarges his fortune, he increases his expenses: says Solomon, *when goods increase, they are increased that eat them, and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes;‡* so that the rich man is frequently as much straitened to defray all the charges he is at, as the man who has only a bare competency to defray the smaller expenses he is at; and properly speaking, the poor man enjoys the blessings of life as much as the rich, and perhaps more, for *the sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much, but the abundance of the rich, will not suffer him to sleep;||* though the rich man has more of the superfluities of life, it is probable these frequently do him more harm than good, not only

\* 1 Tim. vi. 9.

† Eccl. v. 10.

‡ Eccl. v. 10.

|| Eccl. v. 12.

by depriving him of his natural rest, but also by injuring his constitution and shortening his days: but strictly speaking, if the poor man has a sufficiency of food and raiment, he enjoys as much as the rich; for enjoyment does not consist in lavishness or wastefulness, neither in an abuse of the good things of life, i. e. by spending them unnecessarily, or in abusing ourselves or them by getting intoxicated with, or using them to excess; therefore, *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content*:\* but being contented with a competency, by no means encourages idleness; for *if any man will not work, neither shall he eat*:† and, says the apostle, *them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread*;‡ and it is next to impossible for idleness and honesty, to dwell long together, unless we have an independency to support ourselves in it. *If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*;|| then it is our duty to provide for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight

\* 1 Tim. vi. 8. † 2 Thes. iii. 10. ‡ Thes. iii. 12.

|| 1 Tim. v. 8.

*of men ;\* and to owe no man any thing, but to love one another, to render to every man his due ; tribute to whom tribute, and custom to whom custom† is due, &c.*

If any man by honest industry (without coveting it) should be smiled upon by providence, and advanced to a fortune in life, and should use it in a proper manner, it will be a blessing ; but if improperly, it will be a curse : for this may be considered as five talents put into his hands to improve to the glory of God, and the good of his suffering fellow creatures ; so that when he is called to give an account of his stewardship, if he has buried his talents in the earth, or hid them in a napkin, it will fare far worse with him than if he had been as poor as Lazarus who lay at the rich man's gate : if men were to consider this rightly, they would be shocked at the very idea of riches, knowing that if they have them, the more will be required at their hands ; but he who improves what he has to the glory of God in giving to the poor, and in relieving the distressed, and the like, will be amply rewarded in that day, when God shall *come to make up his jewels,‡* in hearing him say,

\* 2 Cor. viii. 2.      † Rom xiii. 7, 8.

‡ Mal. iii. 17.

*thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make the ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.\**

Then let not the rich man glory in his riches,† for they are only lent for a small time, and then will be taken away; and says Paul, charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.‡ Let not the rich man suppose that he is any wiser or better than others, because he has more of the mammon of unrighteousness committed to his charge, for a few days; neither let him act as though he was superior to them, for he is only mortal and subject to pain like them, and exposed, as they are, to death, and must have his dust mingled shortly with theirs, in the silent grave, and stand before the same judgment seat, and be dealt with as impartially, and with as much rigour as the poorest man living: let him also remember, that if he disdains or flights the poor, that God, who is the Judge of all, does not; for behold a Lazarus carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, and hath not God chosen the poor of this world

\* Matt. xxv. 21.      † Jer. ix. 23.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

*rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.\* And farther, remember him that was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich;† he humbled himself, and came in the form of a servant, &c. yet let not the poor man think that in consequence of his poverty alone, that he is the favourite of heaven; for none are such, either rich or poor, but those who are faithful in occupying till their Lord comes.*

*Rule 2.* Let us not concern ourselves too much about what men think of us, lest if they extol us, we should have our minds puffed up with vanity; or lest if they say something evil of us, we feel ourselves dejected and cast down, or some risings of resentment against them; any of these effects would be dangerous. Says the wise man, *take no heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:‡* let us not trouble ourselves about the opinions of men concerning us, for these exercises have a tendency to rob us of that peace and consolation of mind, that a Christian ought at all times to possess. Some are all their lifetime subject to bondage, by these kinds of surmises, that others have a bad opinion of them; whereas, if all men thought well of us, it would make us none the better; and,

\* James ii. 5. † 2 Cor. viii. 9. ‡ Ecl. vii. 21.



on the other hand, if they were all to think evil of us, it would make us none the worse ; for the apostle saith, *it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment :*\* then as men are not to judge us, our happiness ought not to ebb and flow according to their opinions about us ; let us be contented with knowing that God sees the purity of our intentions, whether men think evil of us or not, and *commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*† But we ought never to act so as to cause others to have a bad opinion of us, but if they think evil of us, let it be for well-doing, or being faithful in the discharge of our duty : then the worst will be to themselves, and if they do wrong by misjudging us, let us not do wrong in entertaining any prejudice or grudge in our minds against them, but *render unto them good for evil*, that by so doing we may obtain the approbation of God, which is a thousand times better than the good opinions of all mankind.

*Rule 3.* Let us not indulge ourselves in any thing but what we are willing should be proclaimed upon the house-top ; then we need never be afraid to have our characters investigated ; but if we commit any secret

\* 1 Cor. iv. 3.

† 1 Pet. iv. 19.

evil, the day is coming when they will be exposed to the view of men and angels, whether they have ever come to the knowledge of men in this world or not. *For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;*\* then we ought always to say with Hagar, when she was all alone in the wilderness, *thou God seest me* ;† being assured that however secreted we may be, from the view of an observing world, the flaming eyes of God search out our every action. He who commits an evil, because he can hide it from men, proves thereby that he has none of the fear of God before his eyes, and that he is hypocritical in the intentions of his heart. A man who indulges himself in any capital evils of this kind, is always tormented with apprehensions, that by some means or other, his iniquity will be discovered, and we must know that this is very inimical to happiness ; but a consciousness of our own innocence and integrity, affords the greatest tranquility to our minds, so that in every thing the christian has the pre-eminence.

*Rule 4.* Let us be punctual to our word, and honest in all our dealings ; this

\* Eccl. xii. 14.

† Gen. xvi. 13.

gives us the fairest reputation among men of almost any thing else, and it is just and right that we should gain a good reputation, if we can do it by honest and upright means. There is nothing that brings more credit to the cause of religion, than for the professors of it to be punctual in coming up to their word, faithful in fulfilling their contracts, and honest in all their dealings; the very motto of christian obedience is, *all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*;\* as we would not wish to be deceived by another falsifying his word, so let us not deceive any by falsifying our word. If any unforeseen contingency should take place, and render what we have promised impracticable, let us immediately repair to the person, and tell him the cause, that we may not lay under the stigma of falsehood. Many a fair reputation in other respects, has been essentially injured, by omitting this one thing. According to the doctrine of the scriptures, we are not only to avoid evil itself, but every appearance of it. The same may be said respecting honesty, inasmuch as we would not have men to wrong and to cheat

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\* Matt. vii. 12.

us, so we are bound not to wrong or to cheat them, for dishonesty is a breach of the eighth commandment, *thou shalt not steal*; it is taking away our neighbour's right, if we take the advantage of his ignorance, or of his necessity, as much as if we were to take his goods away in a clandestine manner: true, it is counted more decent in the eyes of the world, (i. e.) it is not so much reproached; but in the view of the Searcher of hearts, it is the same, and *wealth gotten by vanity, shall be diminished*;\* or by such means, shall not prosper.

*Rule 5.* Let us never speak about an absent person, without friendship or duty call us to it; that is, never say any thing about others, by way of disparagement; for speaking evil of men behind their backs, is no ways calculated to do them any good, or those we are speaking to; unless when duty calls us to warn those we are conversing with, to shun their company and bad examples; but only in such cases as this, let us trouble ourselves with the faults and failings of our neighbours—but *as he which hath called us, is holy, so let us be holy in all manner of conversation*†—let us cultivate and improve our own vineyards, at home;

\* Prov. xiii. 11.

† 1 Pet. i. 15.

for he who beholds the beam in his own eye, scarcely discerns the mote in his brother's eye. If he is properly humble, he views the sins that he has committed himself to be greater than the sins of other men, because every one is most sensible of his own sore and sickness : he not only sees but feels them with all their aggravating circumstances ; then if he discovers the perverse propensities of his own heart in their true light, or looks over his long catalogue of follies, committed in past life, he will scarcely make the failings of other men the subject of his social talk. If we can speak no good of them, let us say nothing about them ; but if we can tell of any thing praise-worthy in their actions, it may be well to speak of these, that others may be encouraged to do likewise ; for let us remember, the tongue *is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison ;\** and Solomon says, *an ungodly man diggeth up evil, and in his lips there is as a burning fire ; a froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends ;†* and *he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief:‡* then as the tongue is an unruly member, we ought to hold it continually, as with a bridle ; the

\* James iii. 8.      † Prov. xvi. 27, 28.

‡ Prov. xvii. 20.

greater part of some people's troubles arise from their imprudent or wicked conversation : then if we are inclinable to evil communications, let us think twice before we speak once, and guard particularly against this weakness, lest in the opening of our lips, we should bring destruction.\* God has said, *for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment.*† Alas ! how many idle words proceed from our lips through the course of every day ! then what a long catalogue of vices will be brought against us, of this kind, if not repented of and forsaken in time.

*Rule 6.* Let us never do any thing through resentment—remembering what God says, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense.*‡ True, sometimes it is necessary to correct evil, but let this be done in a proper manner, and never until justice and duty compel us to it : in a great many cases it is better to suffer than to contend ; especially if it only concerns us as individuals ; but if the community at large are likely to suffer, and duty calls us to correct an evil, let us not feel a secret satisfaction in it ; for this will prove that there is evil at the root ;

\* Prov. xiii. 3. † Matt. xii. 36. ‡ Heb. x. 30.

but rather let it be our grief and pain ; in so doing we shall pattern after our Lord ; for *he doth not afflict willingly, or grieve the children of men* :\* but when he does, it is of necessity, for their good and for his glory. We may be well assured that a holy christian can never feel pleasure in returning evil for evil, or bearing the sword of justice ; for if we love our neighbour as ourselves, it will grieve us as much to execute punishment upon him, as if we ourselves had to bear the same punishment—And further, whatever is done through resentment, is done wrong, however favourably it may be looked upon by men : he *that pondereth the heart*,† discovers the principle from which it springs, and will make a memorandum of it in his book against them ; for God does not look merely at the outward action, but at the spirit from which that action flows : so that an action may be ever so right in itself, yet he who performs it from a base or impure principle is not justified therein—Then he who avoids a resentful spirit, feels his heart calm and unruffled—passes on more smoothly through this rugged wilderness—and also

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\* Lam. iii. 33.

† Prov. xxiv. 12.

has his hope full of immortality beyond the grave.

*Rule 7.* Let us ever act in God's fear, and with a single eye to his glory, for if *thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness,\** says our Lord: man then is not the object we are to seek to please; for, says Paul, *If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.†* It is very possible for a man to preserve a fair character in the sight of his fellow-creatures, and still be destitute of this piety towards God: but forasmuch as God is to be the judge both of the quick and dead,‡ we must not be contented with having only a fair outside, but our hearts within must be clean, and our intentions pure in all things—every thing must be done to *the glory of God,||* and *in the name of Christ.*

There are three ways of offending God—first, by presumptuously doing what he has forbidden—Secondly, by wilfully leaving undone what he has commanded—and thirdly, by doing what he has required, from improper motives, or with impure principles. All evils, in some way or o-

\* Matt. vi. 22, 23.

† Gal. i. 10.

‡ Acts x. 42.

|| 1 Cor. x. 31.



ther, lie couched under these three particulars: therefore, he who acts in the fear of God, and with a single eye to his glory, will avoid offending him in any of these ways; he will also consult God's pleasure, in every thing he does; for there is nothing so minute or trivial that we are about to do, but what we ought to consult the will of God in, and pray for his blessing upon it; for what hope have we, as christians, of succeeding well in any thing, unless we have the blessing of God with us in what we do.

*Rule 8.* Let love be the actuating principle of our souls, and faith the mainspring of all our actions; for *love is the fulfilling of the law,\** and *thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:†* on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. This perfect love to God will lead us to an uniform obedience to him, for we always desire to please the being we love most; hence it will lead us to the several duties and the several mortifications, pointed out in his word: and if we love our neighbour as ourselves, inasmuch as we would not do ourselves a wilful injury, and as *no man ever yet hated his*

\* Rom. xiii. 10.    † Matt. xxii. 37, 39. 40.

*own flesh* ;\* so this love will teach us never to hate or injure another : forasmuch as we wish to do ourselves all possible good, we ought to exercise our benevolence towards others. That excellent precept of our Lord will exactly suit with such a principle as this ; *whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them* ; and whatsoever ye would not desire men to do unto you, that is of an offensive nature, avoid the doing of it unto them. This rule will work through all our transactions with mankind, and no one can fulfil this precept, but he who has love, as his acting principle. And we cannot possess this love any farther than we exercise faith in Christ, as the main spring of our actions ; for *without faith it is impossible to please God* :† faith was the strong hold of all the ancient worthies, “ who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,”‡ &c. It is *by faith we stand* ;|| yea, *we walk by*

\* Eph. v. 29.

† Heb. xi. 6.

‡ Heb. xi. 33, 34.

|| Rom. xi. 20.

*faith* ;\* and *the just shall live by faith*.† Faith in Christ is as necessary to the soul as nerves and sinews are to the body, to give it motion ; and love to God and all mankind is as necessary as the soul is to the body, to give it life. If the soul leave the body, the nerves and sinews may remain, but they will be dead and useless : so if we lose our love, we may have a faith remaining, it is true, but it will be a dead one : *faith without works is dead*,‡ being alone : then true faith and gospel love are so united, that we cannot have the one without having the other. If we live constantly in the exercise of these two principles, we shall enjoy continually the kingdom of an inward heaven.

*Rule 9.* Let us never be idly employed, for idleness may be called the parent of all mischief. When we are not employed about any thing that is useful, our minds will be taken up with something vain or trifling. Idleness is a great inroad to temptation, in many ways, and renders us incapable of resisting it ; but if we are always busy in something that is useful to ourselves or others, either to the soul or to the body, it will keep away a whole swarm of vain,

\* 2 Cor. v. 7. † Gal. iii. 11. ‡ Jam. ii. 20.

idle, and roving thoughts, which very frequently pour into the minds of the indolent, like the plagues of Egypt. Then let us always be in some useful exercises, either working with our hands, pursuing some useful branch of knowledge, or visiting and relieving the distressed; and if we are the heads of families, praying with and for them. And there are other duties which we ought to be very diligent in: one is reading the scriptures; and it would be well to confine ourselves to reading a portion every day, when circumstances will admit of it: another is attending on the duty of secret prayer, at stated and fixed times; like Daniel, kneeling down upon our knees three times a day, making known our supplications to the *Father of the spirits of all flesh*: here we can pour out all our complaints, and vent our griefs into his compassionate bosom, and receive the sweet returns of his love and favour, and come away from a throne of grace, with the answer of peace. If we are faithful in these means, we shall feel the benefit of it in our minds; for God always compensates us in a good degree, while we are in this world, for all our faithful endeavours to please him.

*Rule 10.* Let us never aim at high things in this world. If we are rich, and in honourable offices or stations in life, let us *condescend to men of low estate*;\* and if we are poor, let us pay a suitable respect to those who are above us, either in rank, station, or office, rendering *honour to whom honour is due*;† yea, let *all of us be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*:‡ for we are all dependent one upon another—the rich are dependent upon the poor to do their labour, and the poor dependent upon the rich for employment. Let us attend to the apostle's caution, *Be not high-minded, but fear*.|| We may be rich to-day, and have the fairest prospects of future success, and all this may be blasted to-morrow; for every thing in this world is fluctuating and uncertain: so that if we are aiming at high things, we may get disappointed, in a thousand ways; and these disappointments never fail of making our lives miserable. But our Lord teaches us a lesson calculated to make us happy if attended to, *take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and*

\* Rom. xii. 16.

† Rom. xiii. 7.

‡ 1 Peter v. 5.

|| Rom. xi. 20.

*ye shall find rest to your souls ;\** here then fellow Christians, is our pattern, let us try to excel each other in humility.

*Rule 11.* Let us watch carefully against what are called little sins, for this is a necessary means to keep us from greater : but properly speaking, there are no little sins ; true some sins are more aggravated than others, but every sin may be called great, inasmuch as it is committed against an infinite God, and is the breach of a great law ; *for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ;†* one sin is enough, unrepented of, to sink a soul to hell ; then surely we cannot with propriety, call such a sin small : forasmuch then, as we would wish to be saved from all sin, to have a complete government over our own hearts, and always enjoy true happiness, we must live in a constant habit of *watchfulness ; watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation :‡* be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour,|| The temptations of the devil gaining an ascendancy over us, is what occasions all our troubles ; sin steals upon us

\* Mat. xi. 29.

† Jam ii. 10.

‡ Mat. xxxvi. 41.

|| 1 Peter v. 8.

by degrees, it first presents itself to the mind in a single thought; then if we are always upon our watch, how easily it may be checked while it is in this stage, but if we let it go on till it gets hold of our imaginations and affections, it is very hard to conquer: *behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth*;\* then if we desire to overcome great evils, let us watch against what we call little ones, for these little things are more likely to overcome us, because we apprehend less danger from them; and these always lead on to greater; if we were suitably apprized of their damning nature, and of their fatal consequences, we should flee from them at their first approach, and have no more to do with them than with so many scorpions, which carry a poisonous sting along with them; for sin is *the sting of death*,† and whether we feel the poisonous nature of it at present or not, we shall feel it to our cost, if persisted in.

If we would war successfully against evil, we must *have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*:‡ let us not indulge ourselves in jesting or idle talking, for this damps immedi-

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\* Jam. iii. 5. † 1 Cor. xv. 56. ‡ Eph. v. 11.

ately the ardour of our love, weakens the mainpring of our devotion, and creates a light and trifling spirit, which is contrary to the mind which was in Christ. And we may do well to remember, that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*;\* so that if our talk is more about the world, and the trifling things of sense, than about God and our heavenly rest, it is a bad mark; it proves that our hearts are more set on things below, than on things above; but if we want to live the lives of Christians, let us watch carefully against these things, as well as all other evils; for sin will try to steal into our hearts, through all our bodily senses, especially through the senses of seeing, hearing, and feeling; so that it requires us to be continually upon our watch, to check the evil when it first presents itself to our minds, that it may not make inroads upon us unawares, and snare our souls in an evil time.

Now, O my soul! consider well upon thine immortality—upon the eternity of thy existence, and thine accountability to thy Maker—upon the purity of heaven, and the holiness of God's law. Art thou using the utmost of thy strength, to walk according

\* Matt. xii. 34.



to those rules of holy living, laid down? Remember, O my soul! there is nothing unclean can enter into the kingdom of heaven: let it be the main drift of all thy desires and thoughts to please God, and live a holy and unblamable life; for how couldst thou bear, after having tasted the sweetness of redeeming love, to drink of the bitter dregs of the cup of fury? how couldst thou bear, after having so many comfortable forebodings and anticipations of the glories of heaven, to be shut out for ever and to be conversant with the groans and sorrows of the damned? or how couldst thou bear, after having such sweet communion with the Friend of sinners, to hear his voice at last pronouncing the sentence of thine eternal condemnation, Depart, depart! Oh that thy ears may never be saluted with that dreadful sound! then O my soul! let it ever be thy business to work out thy salvation, with fear and trembling; flee from sin, and live uprightly in the sight of thy Maker: holiness must be thy object, and heaven thy landing port; then hoist the sails of thy good resolutions and ardent desires to catch the pleasant gales of the Spirit, that thou mayest be safely wafted on to the shore of immortality and eternal life.

*The deceitful and alluring nature of Sin, with its fearful consequences.*

BUT now we come to turn our attention to the nature of sin, with its dreadful effects and consequences, both in this world and the next, to see whether it is possible for a man, upon the ground of reason, to be as happy, while under its dominion and influence, as one who is forming his life by the rules laid down in the foregoing sheets.

Inasmuch as sin is the offspring of Satan, it has completely acquired his art of turning into any shape, at pleasure, as it can best suit the inclinations of men, and decoy them to their own destruction. But although sin promises fair, as the serpent did in the garden, it only means to beguile and to cheat the souls of men to their ruin: let it come under whatever guise or pretext it may, it is all falsehood and delusion; for as the inspired penman speaks upon another occasion, it may be seemingly sweet in the commission, *but at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.\**

Sin is such a vain thing, that it cannot be forced to contribute to any wise end at all: shame is its only fruit, and all its plea-

\* Prov. xxiii. 32.

fures pass away, comparatively in a moment, leaving nothing but sorrow and anguish of Spirit behind them ; as for instance, the sin of revenge : what a busy and contriving vice, thrusting itself into all the hardships of war, immersing itself in perpetual storms, and abandoning all peace of mind, to its own capricious humours ; the mark it aims at, is mischief, and bitterness is the fruit of all its toil. Also ambition, another darling offspring of Satan, and the true image of him who begat it, is full of mighty projects, disdains to stoop to things low or mean, but pursues on with eagerness, through all the paths of human life, in quest of fame, and feeds upon the corrupt breath of men, viz. applause. It is true, ignorance makes these out to be great and glorious things, but only take off the mask that opinion hath put upon them, and what remains but vanity and emptiness.

Surely then, no wise man would hazard the ease and contentment of his own mind, in the pursuit of such vain glory : as one observes, " there is no glory like that of an honest and upright mind, and there is no applause like that of our own consciences." Then he who quits the joy of an honest mind, and of a good conscience, for the

glories of the world, is leaving a lasting happiness, to follow after a phantom ; for all this, what difficulties do men chuse to undergo, only to be loaded with heavier sorrows and tormented with greater fears ?

In like manner, all the pains and passions of the proud and covetous, are spent upon things that they can neither want, when they have them not, nor enjoy when they have them ; for one man generally strives to get as much as would be sufficient for ten ; and the trouble of holding the superfluity, deprives him of a proper enjoyment of his own share, for all that a man has above that which supplies the necessities of nature, ministers no more to his happiness than a dream of the night : all the satisfaction he has from them, is merely in idea, because earthly happiness does not result from a man's possessing, but enjoying the good things of the world ; therefore, unless he could extend his appetites with his fortune, he only increases trouble with his plenty ; for *he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.\** And as the wise man says concerning knowledge, so we may say of riches, *he that increaseth (riches) increaseth sorrow ;* and, says he, *what*

\* Prov. xxviii. 20.

*good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes:*\* so idle and fruitless are all the schemes and labours of ambition and covetousness, the foolish man is so unlucky as to break his sleep, consume his spirits, rack his brains, and employ all his skill to no purpose, and after all his toil and sweat, is no easier or more contented than he was before.

Vice is an imposture and delusion, it flatters men with the greatest expectations of good, it dances before the eyes of their imaginations, like an ignis fatuus, while it leads their unwary souls astray, and in the end produces nothing but grief and vexation of heart; it defeats and undermines all its own projects, and always concludes in disappointment, like the harlot in the Proverbs,† who inveigles with the wanton kisses of her lips, and draws the silly youth after her, *like a fool to the correction of the stocks*; her house is perfumed and her bed is decked with tapestry, but all this while *it is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death*, such an impudent and wanton monster is sin, its temptations dazzle the minds of men with counterfeit beauties, it comes with all its smooth and amorous ad-

\* Eccl. v. 11.

† Prov. vii. 16. 22. 27.

dress, but in the mean while is nothing but a painted serpent, which we no sooner take into our bosoms than we feel its inveterate sting; it lays the most deadly gales in our consciences, and infects all the present joys of human life; for there is no vice, but what some curse or other is intailed upon: intemperance is generally punished with diseases—rashness, with disappointments—injustice, with violence of enemies—and pride with mortifications; these and such like are frequently the punishments annexed to any breach of the moral law, even in this world.

The more effectually to decoy and deceive us, sin often assumes another name to keep out of view its own native deformity, although it always retains the same diabolical nature; as it does not wish to bear its own titles, under some hypocritical pretence or other, it affects to appear in the semblance, and wishes to be called by the name of some virtue; hence pride is called decency—covetousness, frugality—extravagance, generosity—a domineering cruelty, bravery—levity, cheerfulness—and gambling, dancing, and the like, innocent mirth: this is the manner of Satan's baiting his hook, when he is angling for souls; he does not chuse to show the deformed nature of sin,

but casts a veil over its ugly appearance, and burnishes it up to attract and allure the eyes of the beholder.

But if couching itself under these different names, will not answer the purpose, vice will try to persuade us that it is a privilege which God indulges men with. It insinuates, why hath God given you these appetites, if you are not to indulge them; yea, and to give the more weight to these suggestions, it frequently quotes scripture; it is good for a man to eat, drink (and be merry) *and to enjoy the good of all his labours, that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him, for it is his portion:*\* but sin, or Satan, its progenitor, always misconstrues and puts a false gloss upon those passages; eating does not imply gluttony, or drinking intoxication; or else Solomon must have been very inconsistent with himself, to recommend those vices here, and in other places to deliver such curses and anathemas against them: says he, *be not among wine-bibbers, among riotous eaters of flesh, for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags:*† being merry does not imply levity, but is

\* Eccl. v, 18.      † Prov. xxiii. 20, 21.

*any merry, let him sing psalms.\** And those vitiated appetites, God did not give to men, they were made so by the introduction of sin into the world.

Thus if sin cannot impose itself upon us by force and power, or by its deceit or cunning, or its fictitious names; or cannot make us believe it to be a privilege, yet it will justify itself from some favourable pretext, cover itself up under some probable circumstance, and find an excuse for its worst actions by the difference of time or place; sometimes by measure and degree, and sometimes by mode and manner: to cheat, that we may insure a livelihood—to lie, that we may avoid some greater evil that might come upon us, if we were to speak the truth: yea, it pleads up that as long as we are in the world, we must do as the world does; but it may be well for us to stop here and consider, that the custom or fashion of others can never justify or tolerate the commission of any evil, neither does it make any sin necessary, for if a thousand are fools enough around us, to burn their hands off in the fire, that is no reason why we should do the same; God has not put it into the power of one man, to predom-

\* Jam. v. 13.



inate over the conscience of another, for if we should live under the most despotic government, and arbitrary laws that ever existed, they could only *kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do* ;\* but never can, without our own consent, force us to commit the least evil.

Thus vice always makes some plea in justification of itself, and changes its form to suit the humours of men ; and no marvel, *for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light* :† so then Satan is imposing one sin after another upon men, till their whole souls, from the crown of the head to the soles of their feet, are covered over with wounds and putrifying sores ; while their thoughts within them, are like the troubled ocean *when it cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and dirt*.‡

Sin has not only occasioned those roarings and gripings of conscience which men feel, while under its tyrannical yoke, but it has disorganized nature, and introduced confusion into the system of the universe ; it sets neighbours, kingdoms, and families at variance with each other, it prompts men to murders, robberies, thefts, and va-

\* Luke. xii. 4.      † 2 Cor. xi. 14.

‡ Isai. lvii. 20.

rious acts of injustice : if we attend criminal courts, or the execution of malefactors—if we turn our eyes to dungeons and prisons, and behold human beings loaded with chains ; then visit Lazar-houses and bedlams, and survey these spectacles of misery in those different scenes—if we view armies advancing towards each other in all their martial grandeur, and hear the dreadful roaring of their cannon, the clashing of their swords, and the groans of the dying, in the field of battle ; and see the effusion of human blood, with all the dissolution of nations and countries laid waste, men deprived of their property and privileges—relations snatched from each others arms—husbands from their wives—and parents from their children—and children from their parents, falling victims to cruel avarice ; and many who are not slain by the sword, reduced to the most abject poverty ; and others to a servile slavery, under cruel task-masters, or banished from their own native country into some distant land, there to waste and pine away the poor remains of life, among strangers, destitute of the principles of humanity. From all these views, we can discover in a small degree, what havoc sin has made in the world.

But in addition to this, if we attend the beds of the sick, and listen to their moans and complaints, and see the various disorders that infect human nature—if we go through the charnel grounds or church yards, and consider the bodies therein deposited, some of ancient, and some of recent date; some who died in the bloom of youth, and some in decrepid old age: but if we not only view the degradations made upon our bodies, liberties, or estates, but the mental perturbations, the poignant grief and sorrows attendant upon all these calamities, some bereaved of their senses, others in all the terrors of black despair, crying out like Chalmers, torture, torture, torture! some in these fits of frenzy, playing the dreadful game of suicide, and putting an end to their wretched existence in this life, while others are brought to the verge of death, with their eyes wide staring into the frightful gulf of horror and despair, without one ray of hope, or one pleasing view of God's approbation, they are forced to tread the dark valley and shadow of death alone, without any kind hand to guide them through; they now have the painful reflection of leaving the world with every thing they have so fondly doted upon: where are the fascinating

charms of sin now? where are those sweet morsels fled? where now are those good and glorious things which sin gave them such high expectations of?

Instead of gaining any thing, they have met with the loss of every thing; their riches, honours, and pleasures, with all their near and dear friends, have taken their leave of them at once; and, who is that they behold? what spectre, what fearful shape coming towards them with a menacing look, and filling them with terror? Ah! it is he who allured them to vice, and gave them such high hopes beyond the grave; he now comes to be an executioner of the divine vengeance, to chain them down in eternal confinement. Oh! Satan, Oh! sin, how wretchedly have ye deluded them; into what an abyss of misery have they plunged themselves for ever, by hearkening to your lies.

But if we were to go on further, observing the effects and consequences of sin, and could see the infernal mansions disclosed to view, with all the miseries, plagues and chains of the damned; the hopelessness of their state, the eternity of their punishment, and the greatness of their torment; now if we come to a serious view of all these effects and consequences of sin together, how can

we feel ourselves happy, while we harbour such a destructive principle in our hearts: we have been setting forth the treacherous, deceitful, and detestable nature of sin, that those who wish to walk in the way to happiness hereafter, may be aware of its snares, and also that others may be led from viewing its devilish designs and ends, to forsake all its paths, and seek for true happiness, which is only to be found in a freedom from sin.

But, in order to give a clearer idea of the difference between one who is walking in the way to heaven, which we have already described, and one who is following the perverse inclinations of his own heart, and walking in the broad way to destruction; we shall draw out the wicked man's character.

*A short View of the wicked Man's Character, with a serious Admonition to all who know not God.*

THE ungodly man is serving the vilest of masters, doing the filthiest of drudgeries, and acting from the basest of principles, viz. pride, infidelity, presumption, and ingratitude; he is performing the blackest of deeds, and under the most servile sla-

very to sin and the devil; his soul is defiled, his conscience is guilty, his heart is pained, and the passions of his mind, by times, are wrought up into the highest pitch of terror; so that his mind is truly like a troubled sea which cannot rest. And how can it be otherwise, when by his transgressions, he has introduced so much discord into the creation of God; the Almighty himself is against him, his flaming justice is like a sword unsheathed against him, his vengeance is like a cloud hovering over him, only waiting the hour of death, and then it will be wrapped around his soul like a garment.

As he has introduced disorder into this lower world, the very creation is against him, for the *ground was cursed for his sake*;\* and says the apostle, *the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain*† in consequence of his sin; and we have reason to conjecture that if God would give them leave, they would cry out against him, as an intolerable burden to them, and soon rid themselves of him; the earth would swallow him up, as it did Corah, Dathan, and Abiram;‡ or whirlwinds would catch him

\* Gen. iii. 17.      † Rom. viii. 22.

‡ Num. xvi. 31, 32.

up and dash him upon some flinty rock in the midst of the waters, where he would meet with speedy destruction ; or volcanos would burst out of the earth and consume, or the lightnings from heaven would slay him as they did Job's cattle ; or else a deluge of waters would drown him, as it did the old world of the ungodly.

Such a man cannot look over one leaf of God's books of creation, providence, or revelation, but what he feels himself condemned ; for the creation and providences of God loudly preach to him his ingratitude ; and God's word is like Ezekiel's roll to him, written full of *lamentations, and mourning, and woe* :\* the old testament binds a heavy curse upon *every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them*,† and the gospel of the new covenant fills its mouth with thunders and damnation against all who do not believe in Christ, the Saviour of the world ; and beside all this, the Spirit of God, christians, and christian ministers, are admonishing him of his miserable state and fearful end ; afflictions come in like a flood upon him, oft-times he is filled with acute

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\* Eze. ii. 10.

† Gal. iii 10.

pain, death stands menacing him with all his terrors ; and before him is represented a loathsome grave, where his body which he has indulged and fed so deliciously, must be a prey for worms and putrefaction, and *hell from beneath is moving to meet him at his coming ;*\* *yea, hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure,*† ready to receive the poor quivering soul as soon as ever it is dislodged from this mortal tenement.

To view this man through the whole course of his life, you see nothing that bears the least resemblance to happiness, and yet it may be he boasts himself of being one of the happy ones of the earth : true, he is living a kind of dreaming life ; sin, like an opiate, has lulled his soul into a profound sleep, only once in a while when God's admonishing voice rouses him from his supine state. Alas ! this happiness he is dreaming about, how much is it beneath the dignity of a human soul ; the greater part of his pleasures are merely brutish, and there are none of them that can afford him any rational satisfaction in his reflecting moments.

And view his prospects beyond the grave, they are dreary at best, he is left to a dread-

\* Isai. xiv. 9.

† Isai. v. 14.



ful uncertainty with respect to his future state, so that he is ready to say, in the language of the poet,

“Thou must expire, my soul! ordain’d to range  
Through unexperienc’d scenes, and myst’ries  
    strange,  
Dark the event, and dismal the exchange!  
But when compell’d to leave this house of clay,  
And to an unknown somewhere wing thy way,  
When time shall be eternity, and thou  
Shalt be thou know’st not what, nor where, nor  
    how,  
Trembling and pale, what wilt thou see or do?”

But although his future state may be an uncertainty to his incredulous mind, yet if God’s holy word is to be believed, it is no uncertainty at all; for it is there declared in express words, *that the wicked shall be turned into hell,\** and that *the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation—and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever.†*

Then, O man! as sure as God lives, and thy soul lives, whoever thou art, who livest in sin, thou wilt find at last that sin will be a bitter thing, whatever thou mayest think

\* Psa. ix. 17.

† Rev, xiv. 9. 11.

of it now—*the wages of sin is death*,\* both temporal and eternal: the idea of temporal death is very shocking, as a certain Philosopher observes, “Of all terrible things, death is the most terrible.” To think of the vital principle being extinguished, which unites soul and body together; and the body and spirit, who have been companions for such a length of time, to be torn asunder, never to meet again till the great day of the resurrection; and this body to be a putrid carcase, with all its wonderful organs; the instruments of sensation and motion to be entirely out of tune; with all its boasted agility, to be motionless in the grave; with all its beauteous form and complexion to be a loathsome lump of corruption, and at length turned into earth again, from whence it was taken. But the death of the soul is far more dreadful, to be separated from God’s smiles—to be continually under his frowns—to be banished from heaven—from the residence of the blessed—from the company of angels and the spirits of the just—and God’s wrath, *like a river of brimstone*, continually pouring down upon them; *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*† It is called by some

\* Rom. vi. 23.

† Mark ix. 46.

*a living death, and a dying life*; it is an existence where they are always in the agonies of death, but never have the satisfaction of expiring; while myriads of ages are rolling around, their pains will only be beginning; and when millions of millions more are added, their miseries will be no nearer concluded than when they first began.

“Never! where falls the soul at that dread sound,  
Down an abyss how dark, and how profound!  
Down, down, I still am falling! horrid pain!  
Ten thousand thousand fathoms still remain!”

Figure out to thyself, sinner, that thou now seest one of thy neighbours, who lived a few years ago by thee, as merry and as sportive as thyself, lying in those flames, tormented with the never-dying sting of death, writhing his soul about, wringing his hands, cursing God, and looking up.

“Where shrieks, the roaring flame, the rattling chain,  
And all the dreadful eloquence of pain,  
His only song! black fire’s malignant light,  
The sole refreshment of his blasted sight!”

and in this state wishing for annihilation, to put an end to his misery; but no relief can

be found, and at the same time crying out in language like this—

“Just is my lot, but oh ! must it transcend  
The reach of time ? despair a distant end ?  
With dreadful growth shoot forward, and arise  
Where thought can't follow, and bold fancy  
dies !”

And if thou wert to consider, at the same time, that thou thyself art every moment in danger of the same torment ; realize it as thy own condition : thy life is at stake, thy moments are fleeing away, thy soul is suspended from falling into this hell, only by a slender thread, what felicity canst thou enjoy here, or what happiness canst thou promise thyself hereafter ? surely if thou wert to consider, thou hast nothing to yield thee one ray of comfort.

Then, O sinner, who readest these lines, *escape for thy life, look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain, escape lest thou be consumed !*\* Time is rolling away, God is calling upon thee, death is urging, heaven is inviting, hell is threatening, and God's word is opening its mouth in the most masterly arguments, to persuade thee. Methinks every thing around thee might

\* Gen. xix. 17.

preach to thee the necessity of giving thy heart to God. There is nothing that thou eatest, drinkest, or wearest, but what might preach to thee the great lesson of gratitude, and every minute, hour, and day, that thou livest, might declare unto thee the long-suffering and tender mercy of thy Maker, if thou wouldest only incline thine ear to their admonishing voice. How canst thou ever think of the great goodness of God in giving his only-begotten Son to die for thee? how canst thou think of his amazing condescension? of his meekness and lowliness? of his temptations and afflictions? and of his bloody death and passion? How canst thou fancy to thyself, that thou hearest his solemn groans, which caused nature to shake, and the rocks to rend! and that thou seest the sable curtain of night drawn over the earth! the sun veiling himself in darkness, without an ordinary eclipse! and the wondering hosts standing around! and some of them exclaiming, *truly this was the Son of God!*\* and when thou callest to thy view the trickling blood and the stained raiment of the dear Redeemer; when thou fanciest that thou seest that blessed head reclining upon his sacred bosom, and he giving up

\* Matt. xxvii. 54.

the ghost ! and that thou hearest that last agonizing groan, that not only caused angels to wonder, but pierced into the regions of Tartarus itself, and moved all hell with terror ! how canst thou think of the intercession of Jesus Christ with his Father ! that thou hast not lived one moment, only in virtue of his pleadings !—canst thou think of all these things, as a rational being, and as one that has a spark of gratitude in thee, and at the same time be abusing that goodness, which continually upholds thee ! If God were to let go his hand, and no longer support thee, whither wouldst thou sink.

O man what dost thou build thy hopes of happiness upon ? what canst thou promise thyself here, while God himself is angry with thee, and while his flaming justice is burning against thee ; and what dost thou promise thyself beyond the grave ? Behold, is not thy journey into eternity dark and dreary to thee ; or dost thou, a poor tiny particle of dust, think that thou canst contend with Jehovah ? *Hast thou an arm like God ? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him ?*\* or dost thou think thy strength firm enough to sustain the shock of divine vengeance ? what staff of a broken reed is it

\* Job xl. 9.

that thou art leaning upon for help? wilt thou set the dry stubble in battle with the fire? Why I tell thee man, the fire will devour it at once; thou art no more before God than the dry leaf before a furious whirlwind; then how dost thou expect to meet the Almighty, *when he shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake*;\* canst thou stand up and plead thy own cause, and defend it against the demands of divine justice? or canst thou bribe the judge by silver and gold? or what dependence hast thou? canst thou then look at the day of reckoning with delight? or canst thou glance thine eyes down into the flames of hell without feeling any ways concerned about it? canst thou hear the dreadful roarings of God's thundering justice there, or the crackling of those livid flames, and think of the *worm that dieth not*, and the unquenchable fire of his wrath, and feel pleasure in the anticipation of them? or canst thou think with any degree of delight, that in a very few days hence thou shalt be feeling all the realities of that torment thou hast heard described, and much more than the tongue

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\* Joel iii. 16.

or pen of man is able to describe ; that thou shalt be grappling with an enraged omnipotence, and struggling with incensed vengeance ? that thou shalt be as miserable as the wrath of a sin-avenging God, and the fury of awful devils can make thee ? that thou shalt begin thy employment of wailing and gnashing of teeth, and this to last as long as eternity endures.

And if thou thinkest on heaven, what greater satisfaction canst thou have in contemplating those brilliant thrones, that dazzling splendour, that blooming paradise, those ambrosial fields, and the happy throng who are surrounding the throne of God, than in viewing the regions of the damned ; for the greater view thou hast of heaven and its glory, the greater misery thou shouldest feel as a rational creature, at the thought of being excluded from it forever. Thou hast no more reason to feel happy in the contemplation of heaven, than thou hast in the contemplation of hell ; for as thou art unholy thou hast no title for that happy place ; and if it were possible for thee to enter there in thy present state, thou couldst have no satisfaction for the sound of their eternal hallelujahs, and the sight of their pure and spiritual worship and enjoyment, would only increase thy misery ; for thou dost not



delight in these things upon earth, and what reason hast thou to believe that thou wouldst delight in them in heaven, admitting that thou remainest as thou art in thy unchanged state. This may shew the necessity of conversion, or a change of heart ; for it is not the place that makes us happy, but our fitness or qualification to enjoy it. Thou canst not take any of thy carnal pleasures there ; no jesting, no idle talking with merry companions there, no theatres, no balls, and no such diversions as thou delightest in here. And on the other hand if thou goest to hell, there will not be one merry tale told there to allay thy grief, and no bowls of grog, nor bottles of wine to drown thy sorrows, no harlot's houses to run to, and no flesh to pamper and indulge.

Here in this world thou canst laugh thy cares and fears away, and thou canst make thyself merry in talking about hell and damnation, and persecuting and deriding those poor enthusiasts (as thou art pleased to call them) who are so careful to avoid it, by leading holy and religious lives ; but when thou goest to hell, thy tone will be turned ; no laughing there at the flames of hell, or mocking of God's people : there thy stubborn and proud heart will be broken with

grief and vexation, and all thy jeerings come to an end.

Then tremble O man, before the mighty God of Jacob, and fly to him for mercy, and if thou hast not taken sufficient notice of the steps pointed out in the foregoing parts of this work, to obtain happiness, turn back those leaves and read again, and make thyself acquainted with what thy happiness consists in: and know that *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven:*\* and *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*† Then without conversion there is no true happiness, and if thou hast not regeneration in time, thou wilt have no salvation, and living and dying without justification, thou art sure of damnation. Lay this well to thy heart, and away with the dirty scraps or filthy rags of thine own righteousness; come stripped of every vain excuse, throw aside all thy ill-grounded objections, and sue for pardon and salvation, in and through Christ the Redeemer of the world and Saviour of lost sinners.

I now call upon thee by all that is good and gracious. by all the incommunicable attributes of God, by his truth and immu-

\* Matt. xviii. 3.

† John iii. 3.

tability, and by the unsearchable riches and love of Christ, by all the wooings and beseechings of the Holy Ghost, by all the dying groans of a Saviour, and by the goodness and long suffering of a God towards sinner; yea, I call upon thee by all the curses from Mount Ebal, by all the blessings from Mount Gerizim\*, or by the fiery law proclaimed in thunder from heaven, and by the gospel of peace brought down to men by the Son of God, by the glories of heaven, the satisfaction of angels, and the joy of the spirits of just men made perfect, and by all the horrors of hell, by the heights above, and the depths beneath, by all these I call upon thee to make thy happiness sure now whilst thou mayest, for the day is hastening on fast, when these opportunities will be forever gone, resolve now upon the spot, and give Christ thy heart. If thou wilt turn I will be the messenger of good tidings to thee, for *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:*† in the day that thou turnest from them and repentest of them, they shall be remembered no more, for *I have no plea-*

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\* Deut. xxvii. 12, 13.    † 2 Cor. v. 19.

*sure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God:\** turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel:† but if thou persist unto the end, in thine iniquities, I tell thee from the authority of God's word, that if omnipotence himself is able to damn thee, thou shalt be perfectly miserable in both body and soul for ever, for *he that believeth not shall be damned:‡* and *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*||

If thou wilt not believe this, but still cleave to thy sins, thou wilt by and by experience the truth of these words, and that will be a great deal worse than hearing of them. O wilt thou be persuaded to shew some pity to thine own poor soul! thy unworthy friend who is now addressing thee in this small treatise, feels his very heart pained for thee; if it were possible he could dip his pen in tears of blood, and write to thee to shew thee the anxiety of his heart on thine account. O that God might draw thee with *cords of a man, as with bands of love,\*\** and lead thee to the *fountain that was opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for*

\* Ezek. xviii. 82.      † Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

‡ Mark xvi. 16. || Luke xiii. 3. \*\* Hof. xi. 4.

*uncleanness.\** O that thou mightest come and taste some of the happiness, that thou hast only as yet heard of by the hearing of the ear! Come haste away poor captive exile, *draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to thee.†* I hold up the crucified Lamb of God before thee; *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.‡*

*Some concluding Remarks.*

Now before we come to a close, I shall make a few remarks, and reader, I appeal to thee, as a rational man or woman, to determine whether the person who is walking according to the rules laid down in the foregoing part of this treatise, is not abundantly happier, than this latter character described, who is under the power and influence of sin, that destructive principle. The man that is living after the flesh, may, and often does feel a momentary satisfaction in the gratification of his carnal desires, but alas! all this happiness is only brutish; for what pleasure can he have in reflection, either upon his past life, or upon futurity; but that a life may be truly happy, it must

\* Zech. xiii. 1.

† Jam. iv. 8.

‡ Acts xvi. 31.

bare retrospection, afford present enjoyment, and withall an anticipation of futurity. Well this is the life of a righteous man, he can look back with delight (and even if he is lying upon a death bed) upon time well spent; and in the mean time he can feel joy in his own soul, like a well of living water. He can look forward into eternity, and anticipate the happiness that is reserved for him at God's right hand. Not so with the ungodly; he looks back upon his past life with regret, looks forward into eternity with horror, and the very retrospect of the one, and foreboding of the other, effectually damps and puts an end to all his present joys.

From this view the wicked man would have no comfort at all. If he were to give way to reflection, even his greatest comforts would be a source of misery to him; for very frequently, when we are enjoying any thing which we know will last but a very little time; our enjoyment is nearly all destroyed, by anticipating the shortness of its duration, and the greater delight we take in the object, the more we are pained at the thought of being so soon parted from it. And if we were to consider that these fine ceiled houses, and our other comfortable accommodations in life, will soon be snatched away

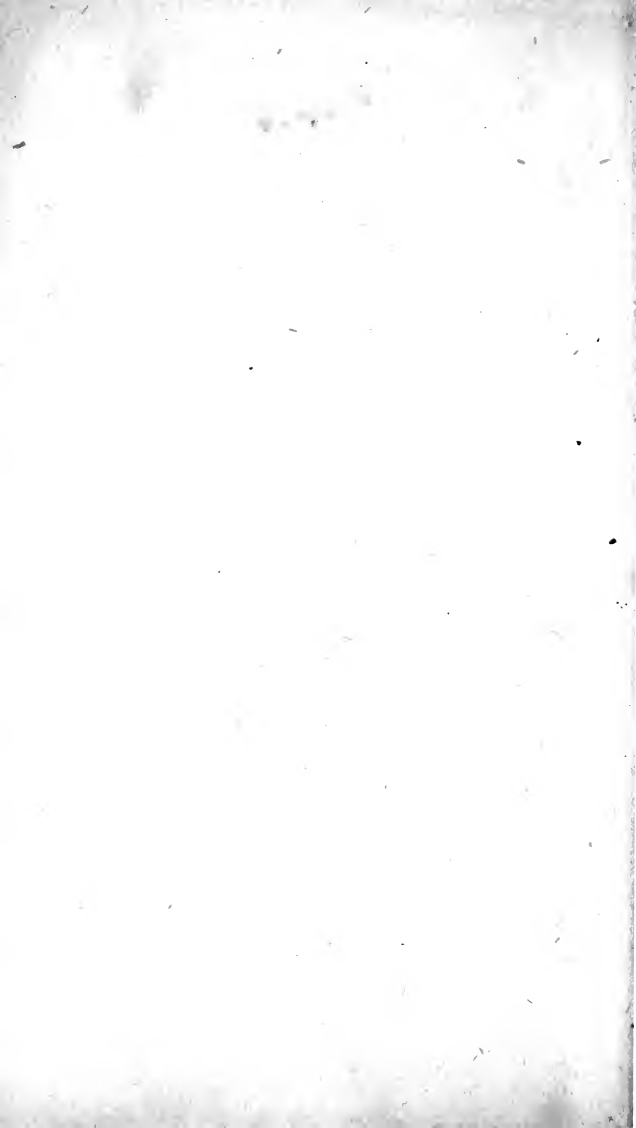
from us or we from them; this would damp all our joys, especially if we are setting our affections on them, and placing too much of our happiness in them.

So that the wicked man can have no peace only in the blinding of his eyes to all his past follies, and to a future state; and like a beast, indulging himself in nothing but sensual gratifications; and the idea of this is terrible also. If he would only stop and consider for a moment, for although he is blinding his own eyes, and shutting them against the light. His *judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and his damnation slumbereth not.\** And the blinder he keeps himself, the greater will be his surprise when destruction cometh upon him, *as an armed man.†* O that men would consider what a fearful thing it is *to fall into the hands of the living God.‡*

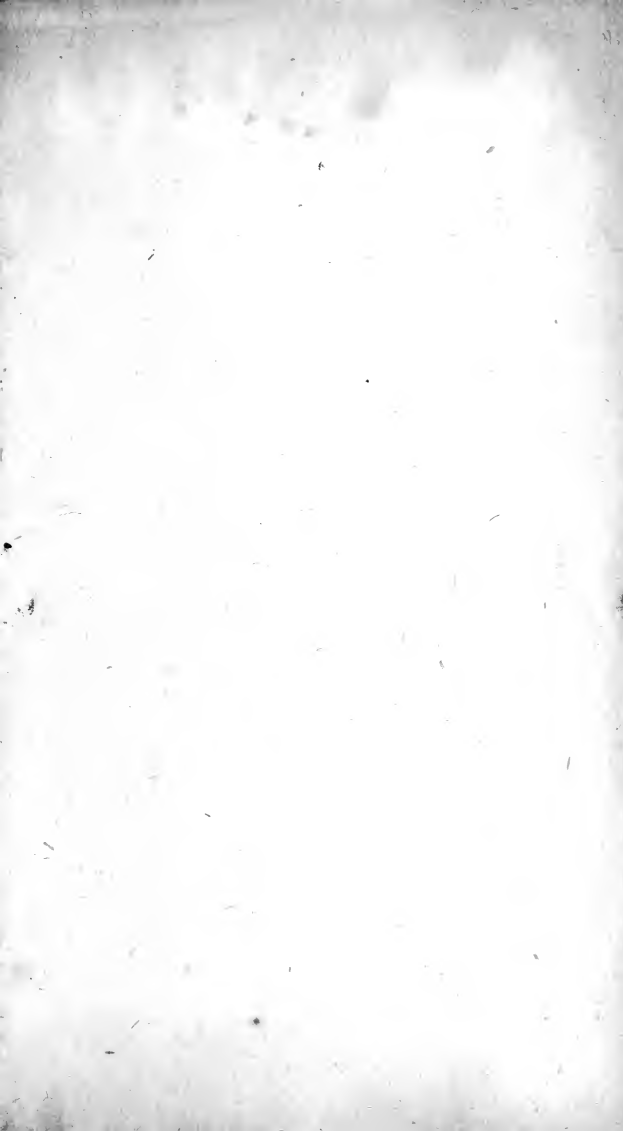
\* 2 Pet. ii. 3.

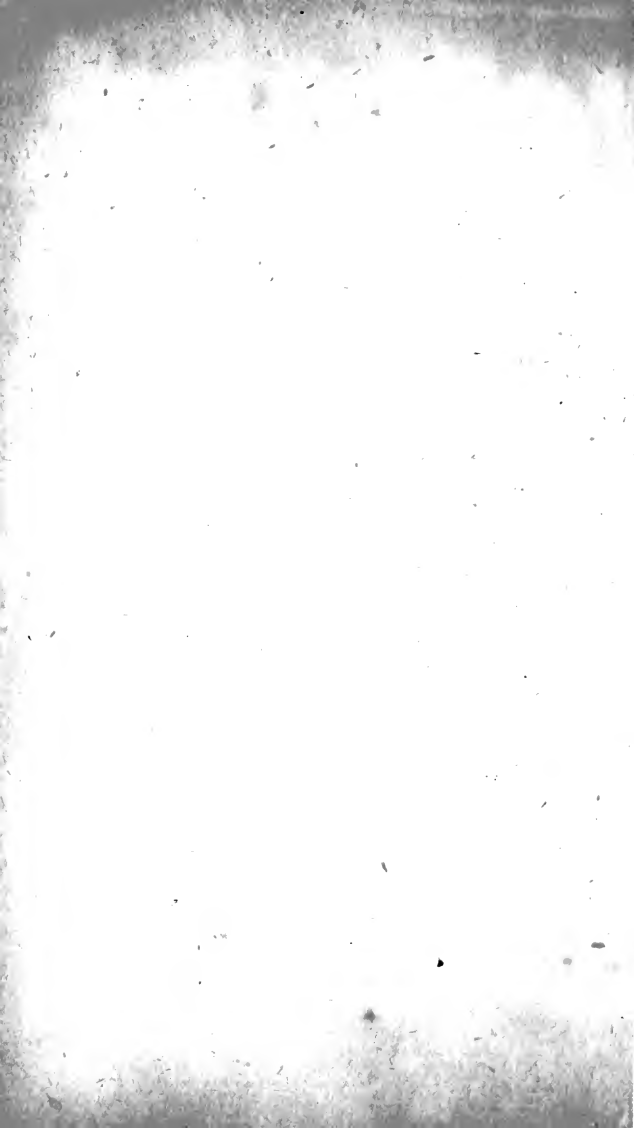
† Prov. vi. 11.

‡ Heb. x. 31.















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